Uncle from America

Kenneth Dexter Miller

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Uncle from America
By Kenneth Dexter Miller

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Foreword

UNCLE FROM AMERICA

In this book our father gives a firsthand account of more than fifty years of extraordinary devotion and service to the Czech people. It contains detailed descriptions of his years living with members of the Czechoslovak Legion as they rode the Trans-Siberian Railway to freedom, and offers a unique story of the development of international understanding during a turbulent historical era between World War I and World War II.

The following excerpts (edited) from a eulogy delivered by Dr. Ján Papánek, ambassador of free Czechoslovakia to the United Nations from 1946 to 1948, at Kenneth Dexter Miller's memorial service in July of 1968 capture the essence of our father's life-long love affair with Czechs from all walks of life:

I should like to speak briefly of what Kenneth Miller meant to the Czechoslovak people over the years. From the time in 1912 when he first visited the land that became Czechoslovakia in 1918, when he made many good friends, among them the T.G. Masaryk family, his interest in Czechoslovakia grew to the remarkable extent of learning the Czech language at a time when perhaps not even five Americans did so. His later service at Jan Hus Church and Neighborhood House endeared him to the Czechoslovak community in New York.

From 1917 to1919 he was one of several secretaries in charge of the work of the Young Men's Christian Association in Russia. His admiration for the 80,000 Czechoslovak Legionnaires fighting for their country's independence and against the Bolsheviks as they made their way across Siberia was more than equaled by the esteem the men had for him. They called him *náš strýc z Ameriky* – our uncle from America. Nor was it a short lived regard, for many years later when he walked the streets of Prague, he was recognized and emotionally greeted as "Strýček," an endearing diminutive of the word uncle.

The award of the Czechoslovak War Cross in 1946 was the first honor Miller received in recognition of his service to the Legionnaires. The honorary degree of Doctor of Divinity from the Charles University, conferred upon him in 1931, was the first to an American.

He returned to Europe soon after World War I (in 1921) to do relief work and aid in rebuilding churches with his beloved wife, Ethel, who fully shared all his interests, including those concerning Czechoslovakia.

In 1937, he was a founding member of the Masaryk Institute of New York which was established to promote US-Czechoslovak cultural and educational exchange. During World War II he served as chairman of the American Relief for Czechoslovakia, and for 20 years thereafter was active with us in the American Fund for Czechoslovak Refugees serving as board member and chairman of the board as well as European director in Munich in the 1950s. In this capacity he interviewed, provided concrete support to and assisted in resettling in the Free World refugees fleeing from Communist persecution.

Kenneth Miller merited well the highest decoration of the Order of the White Lion of the Czechoslovak Republic bestowed upon him during the time of President Beneš's leadership.

Out of regard for Tomáš G. Masaryk and at the request of his two daughters, Dr. Alice Masaryk and Madame Olga Revilliod, he chaired the Masaryk Publications Trust until a few months before his death and was also an honorary member of the Czechoslovak Society of Arts and Sciences.

In my profession I have had opportunities to know great and prominent men of many nations, but I have never known one who wanted so little for himself, who had such compassion for the underprivileged and suffering and who was more dedicated to serve God, family, community and people of so many backgrounds and nations.

Our father's memoir was first undertaken a few years before his death and describes in remarkable personal detail the period before, during and after World War I and beyond from the unique vantage point of one who was intimately connected to the lives of everyday men and women of Czech heritage as well as their world-famous leaders. The description of his journey across Siberia with the Czech Legionnaires and their proximity to the infamous site of Yekaterinburg where Czar Nicholas and his family were assassinated by the Bolsheviks forms the dramatic centerpiece of the account.

Following his death our mother Ethel Prince Miller donated the manuscript of *Uncle from America,* along with other materials from our father's personal files, to the Immigration History Research Center (IHRC) at the University of Minnesota. We are deeply grateful to the Center and to the late Professor Rudolph Vecoli, director of the IHRC from 1967 to 2005, for their long and sustained interest in the publication of *Uncle from America.* We are especially grateful to Daniel Necas, Research Archivist at the IHRC, who thoughtfully and thoroughly edited the

manuscript, supplied footnotes and wrote a brief biographical essay on our father to accompany the publication of the book.

Special thanks go as well to our cousin, Professor Emeritus Nathaniel Davis of Harvey Mudd College, Claremont, California, who drew upon his rich personal and scholarly background to provide an historical context for the panorama of events underlying the narrative.

Kenneth Dexter Miller, Jr.
Elizabeth Miller Hiteshew
January, 2010

Like Gaul, the book of Kenneth Dexter Miller, my uncle,[1] is divided into three parts. The first several chapters describe Dr. Miller's sojourn in the Czech and Slovak lands to learn the languages and to meet and come to know Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk, later Czechoslovakia's first President. Then there is the heart of the book, the military campaigns of the Czechoslovak Legion, which conquered the Trans-Siberian Railway from the Volga basin to Vladivostok. Dr. Miller was an eyewitness to this extraordinary feat. Then the last part of the book describes Czechoslovak events after World War I, until 1960, a few years before Dr. Miller's death.

The original nucleus of the Czechoslovak Legion consisted of Czech and Slovak residents in Russia. Several thousand of them formed a military regiment, called a *družina*, which assisted the Czar's armies as scouts and intelligence agents at the front, taking advantage of their knowledge of German and Hungarian and of the Central Powers' ways to fight for the Allied forces against the Germans and Austro-Hungarians.[2]

In March, 1917, the Czar, inept and feckless, was convinced to abdicate on a train traveling back toward Petrograd, the capital city, from Russian Staff Headquarters in Mogilev, where he had unwisely assumed command of the Russian forces at the front. All of the Czar's front-line commanders had urged him to step aside in messages to the little town of Dno, near Pskov, where the Czar – from his train – had asked his commanders if he should stay or go.

A provisional government was formed in Petrograd under the leadership of Prince Georgi Evgenievich Lvov. Alexander Kerensky soon became Minister of War. Several thousand Czech soldiers had initiated an offensive at Zborov, west of Ternopol in Ukraine on July 1-3, 1917, and acquitted themselves with great

[1] My birth-mother was killed when a car struck her bicycle when I was a little boy. My father married again, to Helen Miller Davis, uncle Ken's sister. I was raised by my father and step-mother, a wonderful woman. That is my relationship to my uncle Ken.

[2] Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk – "The Making of a State, Memories, and Observations 1914-1918," New York: Frederick A. Stokes Co., 1927, p. 149 ff.

gallantry and effectiveness, impressing Kerensky and opening the door to recruiting Czech and Slovak prisoners-of-war in Russia into Czechoslovak fighting forces.[3]

There were many such prisoners-of-war in Russian camps, as the Battle of Lutsk and the Brusilov offensive of 1916-1917 had garnered hundreds of thousands of Austro-Hungarian prisoners, many of them Czechs and Slovaks.[4] After the Czechoslovak demonstration of courage at Zborov, Kerensky permitted the enlistment of prisoners-of-war from the camps, and the Czechoslovak Legion ultimately swelled to 40,000 and more, willing soldiers.[5]

Czech workers, many of them skilled artisans, were also recruited to work in Russian factories, some of them arms plants. The Russians armed the Czechoslovak prisoners-of-war recruited into service with mostly small arms, but the Czechoslovak *družina* – later the Legion – also had some artillery.

Some forty trains were made available to the Legion, and this force of men became the largest disciplined army in Russia, as the Russian forces were disintegrating in disorder.

On November 7, 1917 (New Style), the Bolsheviks seized the government in Petrograd and Bolshevik assumption of power in Moscow and other cities ensued. In Kiev, Ukrainian nationalists organized a government which made peace with the Germans at Brest-Litovsk.

The Bolsheviks in Russia also negotiated peace with the Germans at Brest-Litovsk, signing a cease-fire of essential surrender in April of 1918.

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[3] Masaryk, p. 150; Samuel Harrison Thompson – "Czechoslovakia in European History," 2nd edition, Hamden, Connecticut: Archon Books; Princeton University Press, 1965, p. 298; Ivan Šedivý – "Češi, české země a velká válka, 1914-1918," Praha: Nakladatelství Lidové Noviny, 2001, pp. 119-123, 308-311.

[4] W. Bruce Lincoln – "Passage Through Armageddon: The Russians in War and Revolution 1914-1918," New York: Simon and Schuster, 1986, pp. 121 ff. 250 ff. According to Gregory Campbell the Russians held their fire while the Czechs, fellow Slavs, crossed no-man's land in the battle. F. Gregory Campbell – "Confrontation in Central Europe: Weimar Germany and Czechoslovakia," Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1975, p. 24.

[5] The number grew. Beneš claimed 45,000 at the end of May, 1918. In September, 1918, Masaryk claimed 92,000 although this may have included factory workers. Masaryk, p. 287; Fic claimed, with Siberian recruits, the number reached 61,714 in the summer of 1918. Edvard Beneš – "My War Memoirs" translated by Paul Selver, Boston and New York: Houghton-Mifflin Co., 1928, p. 355; Victor M. Fic – "Revolutionary War for Independence and the Russian Question," New Delhi: Abhinav Publications, 1977, pp. 70-72.

Masaryk negotiated permission from the Bolshevik authorities for the Czechoslovak Legion to pass through Siberia to Vladivostok on the Pacific coast to sail back to Europe and rejoin the Allies in France, to fight for Czechoslovakia's liberation. The key issue became the question whether the Czechoslovak Legion should be disarmed, Trotsky demanding that the troops be disarmed, but Lenin and Stalin taking a more ambivalent position. Apparently, Trotsky wanted to seize control of the Legion to form a nucleus for the Red Army that he was organizing. The Czechoslovaks did surrender some artillery, planes and heavier weapons, but did not give up their small arms, which they said they needed to "defend themselves."

The Legion's trains began to move from Ukraine into Russia. The trains were festooned with decorative bows and branches, and must have been a spectacular sight moving across the Russian countryside.

The Legion had money. The Russians, the British, the French, the Italians and the Americans gave loans, and Masaryk established a head tax that each Czechoslovak soldier owed.[6] This meant that the Legionnaires could buy supplies, which made them a great deal more popular than the Bolsheviks and others who simply commandeered food and other materials.

In general, discipline was admirably good. But these were soldiers, with human frailties and appetites. Victor M. Fic, a scholar of the time, suggested at one point that the Legionnaires were ordered to move, as they were becoming too content with the availability of women and vodka.[7]

On May 14, 1918, there was an incident at Cheliabinsk in the Southern Urals, vividly described by Dr. Miller. The upshot of this clash, in which a German prisoner-of-war was killed, resulted in demands that the Czechoslovak Legion be totally disarmed, demands that were indignantly rejected by the Czechoslovaks.[8] Then, on May 25, the Bolsheviks, instigated by Trotsky, ambushed the headquarters contingent of the Czechoslovak Legion when passing by train through the station of Marianovka (Mariansk), west of Omsk. Dr. Miller also describes this battle, in which the Czechoslovak Legion triumphed over the Bolsheviks.

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[6] Masaryk, pp. 191. 197, 277; Beneš, p. 294; Fic – "Revolutionary War," p. 9; Victor M. Fic – "The Collapse of American Policy in Russia and Siberia, 1918: Wilson's Decision Not To Intervene (March-October 1918)," Boulder: East European Monographs, and Columbia University Press, New York, 1995, pp. 55, 134.

[7] Fic – "The Collapse of American Policy …," p. 55.

[8] Masaryk, p. 275.

Conflict now became open and general between the Czechoslovak Legion and the Bolsheviks. The Legion captured Miass just west of Cheliabinsk and on May 29, 1918, captured Penza in the Volga basin. The fall of other Volga towns followed: Simbirsk (Ulianovsk during the Soviet era), Samara (later called Kuibyshev), and soon Yekaterinburg (later Sverdlovsk) in the Urals. Yekaterinburg was the town where Czar Nicholas II was held during his last weeks of life, and there was speculation that the approach of the Czechoslovak Legion triggered the Bolshevik decision to kill him and his family. This was probably not true, however. Additionally, Dr. Miller found no evidence – or even rumors – when the Czechs occupied the town, that Nicholas' daughter, Anastazia, had survived. Recent forensic examination of the Czar's family's remains confirms that Anastazia perished with her siblings.

Dr. Miller gives a dramatic account of the battle for the section of the railroad that passed through the Lake Baikal tunnels south of Irkutsk. There Legion troops, by a ruse, "uncorked the bottle" where the Bolsheviks were holed up, and triumphed.

By September 1, 1918, the Czechoslovaks were in possession of the entire length of the Trans-Siberian Railway, from the Volga basin to Vladivostok.

Masaryk had admonished the Czechoslovak Legion to avoid taking sides in local Russian conflicts,[9] and Woodrow Wilson was unwaveringly opposed to opening an "Eastern Front" against the Germans and Austro-Hungarians. Wilson opposed various Allied proposals to push north to join the British-led forces in Archangelsk or join other Allied forces in Murmansk. The soldiers of the Czechoslovak Legion themselves were not enthusiastic about an advance to the north rather than the push to Vladivostok, so a linkage with the Allied forces in the north was not attempted. Czechoslovak control over the Volga basin was somewhat precarious, and Woodrow Wilson favored a withdrawal from those positions to the Urals. Consequently, the Czechoslovak Legion withdrew. The renewed "Eastern Front" did not materialize.

The "last gasp" German offensive in the west in the summer of 1918 did not succeed, and Austria-Hungary teetered on the edge of defeat. Finally, the Germans sued for peace, and an armistice was reached on November 11, 1918. Germany was defeated.

The Czechoslovak Legion had pushed through to Vladivostok, with some help from Japanese troops in the maritime provinces of the Russian Far East, and stood ready to be loaded onto Allied ships bound for France. The withdrawal of the Czechoslovak Legion from Vladivostok was finally accomplished in early 1920. Czechoslovak independence was proclaimed in Washington on October 18 and in

[9] Masaryk, p. 280.

Prague on October 28, 1918, with Tomáš Masaryk as the leader of the new Czechoslovak state.

The last part of Dr. Miller's book is a description of the admirable story of Czechoslovakia as a free European state between 1918 and 1938, the tragic history of the Munich Agreement in 1938, and the equally melancholic story of the Czechoslovak coup of 1948 and its aftermath. Dr. Miller did not live to see the break-up of the Czechoslovak Republic and its division into the Czech lands and Slovakia, which would have disappointed him. Still, the Czechs and Slovaks are living in liberty, and that reality would have deeply pleased my uncle.

Nathaniel Davis, 2006

Uncle from America

Chapter 1

I am introduced to the Czechs

"You have been chosen as an 'Immigrant Fellow.' You are to proceed to Bohemia, there to study for a year the language and background of the Bohemian people in order to be able to work sympathetically and understandingly among people of that nationality living in the United States." Such was my commission received in 1912 from the Presbyterian Board of Home Missions in New York.

At the time America was receiving a million immigrants a year, most of them from southeastern Europe: Italians, Jews, Magyars, and the Slavic nationalities: Russians, Poles, Yugoslavs, Czechs and Slovaks. They were scattering throughout the country, but for the most part, they were pouring into our great cities and industrial centers there to create ghettos, "little Italys" and other foreign colonies where strange languages were spoken and odd old-world customs introduced. The coming of these multitudes involved many social, economic and religious problems both for them and for the country of their adoption.

The Presbyterian Church already included a number of Czech congregations; and, as an extensive development of the program of a large Czech church in New York was contemplated, it had been decided that I should prepare myself for service with this group.[1] The plan of establishing "Immigrant Fellowships" seemed to me a statesmanlike move on the part of the Church and for me it opened up an appealing effort to learn to understand the minds and hearts of a group of people not then well known to the American public.

So I set out to study the Bohemian people. I asked myself "Who are the Bohemians? Where do they live? What sort of people are they?"

They are certainly not the long-haired men and short-haired women who lead what is called the "Bohemian life" in the artists' colonies of our cities. "Who then are they?"

A study of the map of Europe disclosed the fact that Bohemia was a province of Austria-Hungary and that its chief city was Prague. A search of bookstores and libraries unearthed very little material for my enlightenment. I therefore set out

[1] Jan Hus Neighborhood House opened in 1914. It was attached to the Jan Hus Presbyterian Church (founded in 1880) at 351 East 74th Street in Manhattan.

upon this journey into comprehension with a mind that was indeed open but singularly empty of any knowledge of the people among whom I was to live and work. An intriguing project lay before me. I was to study such books as I could find. I was to attend lectures at the University of Prague if I found that helpful. But primarily I was to study the people, their historical background and their present political, economic, social and religious life.

By the time I arrived at Prague, I knew that the Bohemians were also called Czechs; that they lived in the provinces of Bohemia and Moravia and that in language and national interests they were close kin to the Slovaks of northern Hungary. I knew too that they were of the great Slavic race which included the Russians, the Ukrainians, the Poles, the Serbs, the Croatians and the Slovenes as well as the Slovaks. I had a very hazy idea of the problems and conditions of these European countries and knew nothing whatsoever of the life of the people.

I found lodgings in Prague with a widow who was pious enough to be interested in a young cleric and human enough to be friendly and helpful to a rather bewildered stranger. For forty-five Austrian crowns ($9.00 a month) I had a large sunny room with a breakfast of coffee and rolls included. My landlady's first query was: "Did you bring your feather-bed with you?" She meant the down quilt which students always carried with them. The quilt which she loaned me was thick and puffy, but quite abbreviated for a six-footer. It kept the middle portion of one's anatomy warm enough but the extremities were quite exposed. It also had a way of slipping off onto the floor when a man turned over in bed. Later I was to see immigrants bound for America carrying these quilts on their back. That is one item I would have left behind in the old country.

My first task was the language. I had brought with me a book with the promising title "Bohemian Made Easy." I soon discovered that I needed a teacher to make the language still easier. My first mentor was a student at the University. He was short and pudgy like so many of his countrymen.[2] As his English was limited to "How do you do?" we made out beginning in German. When I learned how to ask in Czech

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[2] Similar observation was reported by KDM in his "Czechoslovaks in America" (1922) when writing about the intermarriage of Czech Americans "with people of older American stock" and its effect on the physique of the 2nd and 3rd generations, as observed by KDM (from his vantage point of 6' 3"): "The young Czechs are not the short, pudgy men their fathers are apt to be, but incline to the tall, rangy type, characteristic of the Yankee." (p. 76) While unable to verify the average heights of the Yankees and the Czech male population at the beginning of the 20th century, today's statistics show average height of non-Hispanic white American men as 178.2 cm (5' 10 13/64"), of the Czech males as 177.8 cm, the difference being 4 mm or 5/32 of an inch, for United Kingdom males, it is 175 cm.

"What is that?" and "How do you pronounce that?" I found I had a vocabulary abuilding. It was by no means easy going, for neither English nor German nor Latin nor Greek was of any help. This is a Slavic tongue and the roots of its vocabulary are *sui generis*. Who would ever suspect that *okno* means window, or *podlaha* floor, or *strop* ceiling. Words like *krb*, *trn*, *vlk* jump out at you from every printed page, but the printer had not lost his vowels as one might suspect. The grammar reminded me somewhat of Greek in its construction: There are seven cases for the nouns and three genders for the verbs as well as the nouns, and adjectives having endings varying with the gender of the subject. My Czech friends were soon trying out on me their famous vowel-less sentence: *Strč prst skrz krk.* Later, observing their difficulty with the English *th*, I translated that Czech sentence as "Thrust this thumb through the throat" and took a wicked delight in their difficulty in pronouncing it.[3]

But, by dint of hard study and the unashamed practice of words and sentences, as they were acquired, progress was made. Another student was to prove especially helpful in my language study. He had studied English, spoke it fairly fluently, and was anxious to enrich his vocabulary, perfect his pronunciation, and become acquainted with the "American accent." Dvořák and I used to walk together about the streets and parks of Prague. At first our conversation was mostly in English, but gradually more and more Czech crept into it until the afternoon came when we spoke nothing but Czech. Dvořák was a meticulous teacher. As we walked along he would give me the Czech word for this object and that, and make me say it over and over again until I pronounced it to his satisfaction. I remember that we stood in front of a little bush in the park for half an hour or more while Dvořák tried to get me to pronounce its name, *keř*, correctly. That little letter *ř* is the stumbling block for most foreigners. The nearest we can come to giving its phonetic equivalent in English is "rsh." I was glad to see so much of Dvořák in those opening months. For not only was he extremely helpful with the language but, as a nominal Catholic with no particular religious interest, he gave me a point of view radically different from that of many of the other friends I made.

Dvořák it was too who gave me some of my well-remembered lessons in Czech history. For an American who lives so constantly in the present and in the very near past, it was astonishing to observe the absorption of these people in the dim and distant past. Dvořák was as familiar with the Middle Ages as with the 19th century,

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[3] The Czech language evolved from the same Indo-European base as most other languages spoken in Europe today, including English, German, French, Polish, Russian, Latvian, Greek (also Latin) and many others. Some words in English and Czech have to this day recognizably similar roots (mother-matka, son-syn, milk-mléko, etc.).

and he spoke of Jan Hus, Jan Žižka, and Komenský[4] and the other Czech heroes of old with an easy familiarity. Dvořák showed me the window in the castle from which the Bohemian noblemen had been cast at the beginning of the Thirty Years War (1618), an event known as "The Defenestration of Prague." We explored the Old Town, passing through the medieval Powder Tower into a maze of narrow winding streets. We stood in front of the old Town Hall with its famous clock from which brightly painted figures of the twelve apostles emerged in stately procession at each passing hour.

We used to walk together along the bank of the river Vltava. From this vantage point one can see silhouetted against the sky the ancient castle Hradčany and the adjoining Cathedral of St. Vitus. Here the kings of Bohemia had been crowned and here the Habsburg Emperors resided on their infrequent visits to the city. The ancient castle spoke of a glory that was past and looked down on a city whose people were busily engaged making the most of life in the twentieth century. The name "Czechoslovak" was not yet in use. In 1912, I was sensing here in Prague the Czech traditions and history and the Czech point of view.

Dvořák filled my mind with countless stories out of the nation's past. We would walk past a building or a statue and he would stop to expound its history for my benefit. We walked across the Charles Bridge spanning the Vltava. On either side the bridge was lined with statues of various saints, sad, woe-begone figures carved out of stone. Among them was a statue of Saint Jan of Nepomuk. It took Dvořák several afternoons to relate the story of this worthy personage with all of its embellishments of sacred stories and legends.

The story is that Jan of Nepomuk was father confessor to the queen in the days of Wenceslas IV, King of Bohemia (1378-1419). Either for political or religious reasons the king was anxious to discover what his spouse had been telling her priest in the confessional. When the priest refused to do so, the king had his tongue slit and his body thrown over the bridge into the river. It is said that as his body floated down the river seven stars appeared about the dead man's head. Further, it is reported that when his skeleton was discovered on the river bank his tongue was

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[4] Jan Hus (c. 1369-1415) – a Catholic priest influenced by the teaching of the English religious reformer John Wyclif. Hus was condemned by the Council of Konstanz as heretic and executed in 1415. His teaching and death ignited the Czech Reformation movement of the early 15th century.
Jan Žižka (c. 1370-1424) – follower of Hus, military leader of the Czech Hussite movement.
Jan Amos Komenský (Comenius) (1592-1670) – Protestant pastor, educator, later Bishop of the Unity of Moravian Brethren, exiled in 1628, died in the Netherlands.

found to be in a perfect state of preservation, indeed still bleeding from the king's knife. A miracle was declared and eventually the bleeding tongue was transported to the Cathedral of St. Vitus to be preserved there as a sacred relic. Be that as it may, on May 16th, the saint's day of Jan of Nepomuk, thousands of the faithful made a pilgrimage to his shrine in the Cathedral at Prague. Also, special veneration is accorded St. Jan of Nepomuk in the many churches throughout Europe which are named after him.

Dvořák, ever ready to scoff at religion, made a point of asserting that this story was a sheer invention. "Our historians doubt if such a person ever lived. They claim that the tale of his martyrdom was invented out of whole cloth to make people forget Jan Hus the great Reformer and our national hero who was burned at stake as a heretic at the Council of Konstanz 1415."

When we crossed to the other side of the river and began to climb the hill toward the castle, we passed innumerable places of historical interest, ancient castles and palaces of the Czech noblemen of old and of German noblemen of more recent date. We made our way up along the street of the alchemists, a narrow, steep alley lined with quaint little shops. Arriving at the castle itself, we found it bare and forlorn. Emperor Franz Josef had his Schoenbrunn[5] and many another castle, and evidently was not interested in taking good care of the ancient castle of the Bohemian kings. The view from the castle grounds alone made the climb well worth the effort. Below us were the broad reaches of the river with the city lying beyond, the old town immediately beyond the river with the more modern sections spreading out beyond over the adjoining hills as far as the eye could reach. Many church spires stood out as did the dome of the National Theatre near the river's edge. Up the hill a bit at the head of Václavské náměstí, the great central square, loomed the stately National Museum. One's eye could follow the circle of the moat which once protected the Old Town, for one of the city's principal downtown streets followed its course and was named appropriately Na Příkopech (On the Moat). Here was a great modern, bustling city, encircling, engulfing and well nigh burying a medieval one. This is the Czechs' beloved "Golden Prague," "Hundred Towered Prague," "Mother Prague."

After our walks Dvořák and I often stopped at a coffee house for rest and refreshment. The coffee house was an institution in the life of the city. Many of them were imposing, with high plate-glass windows looking out upon the sidewalk. Coffee, tea, chocolate and beer were served at all hours; here one learned to enjoy

[5] Near Vienna, Austria. Franz Josef (1830-1916) – Emperor of Austria (after 1867 of Austria-Hungary) 1848-1916.

the distinctively Czech cakes and sandwiches. During the afternoon and evening, the coffee houses were crowded with people and thick tobacco smoke. Business men came after lunch to sip their coffee and read the papers. Later in the afternoon, the ladies appeared and the atmosphere changed from that of a men's club to that of a popular restaurant at the afternoon tea hour. All of the newspapers and magazines of the Continent were on hand, and it was here that the average citizen of Prague kept abreast of the news of the day and discussed the latest political developments. There were coffee houses of all kinds and of all grades. One was the special rendezvous of the rich; another was the meeting place of the Germans; another quite obviously catered to a Jewish clientele; still another was a center for the university students. Political parties had their informal headquarters at certain coffee houses. The poor man had his coffee house too, the equivalent of our old-time saloon. I found myself spending much time in coffee houses, for they offered a convenience to my conversational necessity and a ready observation tower for my study of human nature, Czech style.

Dvořák and I were not solitary walkers through the streets in Prague, for despite a few automobiles and many trolley lines, in 1912 "Shank's mare" was still the most popular means of transportation. Some walked for exercise; many others to save carfare.

It was interesting to an American to see the way in which these frugal people saved expenditures which in America were considered necessary. Telephones in private homes were then a rarity in Prague. Newspapers, magazines and books were seldom bought; they were read in the coffee house or public library. Sleeping cars and dining cars were luxuries that only foreigners or government officials could afford. On long train journeys, natives sat up all night, securing food from the "piccolos" (bus-boys) who came alongside the train at the main stations to sell "párky" (the Czech equivalent for "hot dogs"), coffee and beer. A walk of a mile or two was taken as a matter of course, and the streets leading from the residential sections to the business and factory districts resounded every morning and evening with the tread of the marching feet of the workers of Prague.

And in the afternoon there was the promenade. At a given hour "society" converged upon Na Příkopech and Národní třída (National Avenue), and for an hour or more the sidewalks of these streets were congested with a slowly moving crowd of strollers. It was an interesting proceeding. There were officers clad in the Austrian grey, students in blue suits and typical student caps, young couples, obviously lovers; elderly couples, obviously not in love; and society folk as eager to parade their new costumes as New York's Easter paraders. Everybody who was "anybody" was there, to see and to be seen. "Bramborová šlechta" (the potato

nobility) Dvořák dubbed them. Whenever my companion passed acquaintances, he would lift his hat in greeting with a wide sweeping gesture while murmuring "Má poklona" (my compliments) to the gentlemen and "Ruku líbám" (I kiss your hand) to the ladies. For an hour or more, old Prague staged its show. Then gradually the slowly moving crowd began to thin out as the promenaders dropped out at the coffee houses along the route or made their way homeward.

Life in most of the homes I visited in Prague was comfortable; however there was a seamy side to life there too. This I discovered when I associated myself at the suggestion of Dr. Alice Masaryk with a sociological seminar. At the sessions of the seminar, a group of students from the department of sociology at the University together with some educators and social workers gathered to discuss the social problems to be encountered in the slums of Prague. Here were to be found all of the evils existent in any large city in the sections where the lowest paid unskilled workers live. It was to me a familiar list: housing, congestion, unemployment, poverty, health, delinquency, crime.

In discussing the conditions we encountered in Prague and comparing them with slum life in such cities as New York and Chicago, Dr. Alice pointed out that in some respects the worst districts of Prague were superior to the slums of our great American cities. She had evidently been impressed with the extent to which tenement house dwellers in America lived on the street, the children playing there while their elders congregated on the stoops of fire-escapes. "You will not find that here," she said, "we have more parks, more trees, more grass in our cities. Life here does not seem to be so barren, so drab." I noted another difference. Slum life in Prague was not complicated by the presence of many lately arrived foreigners; for the most part the poor of Prague were either Czechs or Slovaks.

One day I went "slumming" with a student in the seminar. In the Žižkov district we found terrible congestion with ten to twelve people in a room. We looked in on a one-room cellar apartment. Five people shared these dingy and damp quarters. I talked with one of the tenants, a dirty sore-eyed hag. I could believe the reports I had heard in the seminar as to the prevalence of trachoma and tuberculosis. We passed through quickly, I confess, a block which was said to be the headquarters of the worst thieves in Prague. In striking contrast were the model homes built by the city for workingmen. Here the rooms were light and airy, the surroundings attractive.

I was much interested in the lecturers at the seminar. Dr. Alice Masaryk introduced me to one of them: "This is Dr. Edvard Beneš, a docent at the University. He was one of my father's pupils and had just returned from extensive graduate study at the Sorbonne in Paris." I was to remember that casual meeting in

later years.

Most of the families I came to know lived in well-built apartments with rooms attractively furnished. There was no central heating. The rooms were heated by porcelain stoves set in a corner, the fuel being soft coal or coke. My landlady objected strenuously to my opening the window at night. "Night air is dangerous," she said. "Besides the room gets so cold overnight that it takes me all morning to get heat." Even in public buildings I often had to keep my overcoat and gloves to endure the creeping cold. Taking a bath in the apartment where I lived proved to be a complex procedure. There was a hot water heater in the bathroom and after my landlady had made a great production of stoking it for several hours she would announce that my bath was ready. As the stove generated intense heat as well as hot water I had a combination of Turkish and an American bath. I was not encouraged to take frequent baths.

One day I joined a crowd which lined the sidewalk to watch a funeral cortege pass by. Preceding the hearse were several carriages filled with flowers. The mourners, attired in deep black, followed on foot with a band playing a funeral dirge. I was told that after the internment the band usually struck up a lively march, and the mourners proceeded to the nearest tavern on the double, presumably to drown their sorrow. A woman who had been converted to Protestantism was heard to lament the lack of "fancy funerals" in her newfound faith. "I had always looked forward to my funeral," she sighed.

Such political discussions as I heard in Prague centered about the Balkan War, then raging. The sympathies of the Czechs were with the Serbs, much to the displeasure of the Austrian government. Newspapers were frequently censored or confiscated and some too exuberant partisans of the Serbs were arrested. While harsh repressive measures were being taken against the Serbs and Croatians, more subtle tactics were employed to keep the Czechs in their place. Through its control of the educational system Vienna could put every obstacle in the way of a politically active teacher seeking promotion. "They do not want the rising generation of Czechs to rise too high," friends explained. "You see, autocracy feeds on ignorance; democracy on intelligence."

Both the Czechs and the Slovaks seemed to have been born with a love of music. I was constantly impressed with the number of people both in the city and in the country who could sing or play one or more musical instruments. The violin and the piano were the instruments most favored, but accordion players were encountered everywhere. School teachers were expected to have enough musical ability to be able to give music lessons to their pupils. So there was readily formed a male chorus of teachers whose concerts during the holiday season were artistic events

receiving tremendous popular acclaim. The performances of Czech operas at the National Theatre and the concerts of Czech musicians such as Kubelík, Kocián and later Firkušný[6] also drew enthusiastic audiences. The atmosphere was charged with emotion on such occasions, an enthusiasm due not only to the people's love of music but to their devotion to and pride in their country.

The Czechs love their food too. While it is on the heavy side, consisting of roast pork, duck or goose served with dumplings and sauerkraut, I found it palatable and appealing.[7] The Czechs have a variety of cakes which they serve with excellent and strong coffee in the afternoon, and I always looked forward to their version of "five o'clock tea."

It took me some time to familiarize myself with local table manners. A hostess never fails to urge the guest to a second helping. At the first urging one is supposed to refuse politely but firmly even if one is hungry. Only after repeated insistence by the hostess may one consent to be served again and even then with apparent reluctance. "Thank you" means "No, thank you." When you mean to say "Yes, thank you," you must say "Please." More than once when I was being entertained at dinner or afternoon coffee and had after repeated urging reached the saturation point and was obliged to refuse a further helping, I was asked "What is the matter, don't you like our food? Perhaps it isn't good enough for an American." Later in the country my hostess would often stand behind my chair at dinner cheering me on to more helpings with "Eat, eat!" (Jezte, ještě!) It was long before I became accustomed to sitting down to table with the men folk of the family while the housewife, her daughter and maidservant, if there were such, busied themselves seeing to it that the men's plates were amply and continually full.

I soon learned that one was not expected to carry a bundle for a woman. Once when I had accompanied my host and hostess to the market, I offered to carry home the bundles of food they were planning to offer us for dinner. The husband was quick to rebuke me "Don't do that! People will think you are queer." I was later to learn that one of the more difficult adjustments immigrants had to make to our

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[6] Jan Kubelík (1880-1940) – a violinist and composer, father of conductor Rafael Kubelík.
Jaroslav Kocián (1883-1950) – a violin virtuoso and teacher.
Rudolf Firkušný (1912-1994) – a pianist, student of Leoš Janáček (1854-1928), started his career as a child prodigy at the age of 5.

[7] The Czech cuisine resembles very much food eaten in Austria and Bavaria.

mode of life in America had to do with the position of women in our society. "You spoil your women," was the constant refrain.

I was especially interested in religious life in the homeland of the Czechs. I cannot say that I found religion to be one of the major interests of the Czech people. A large proportion of the people, whether Catholic or Protestant, gave but nominal support for their Church. At that time, in 1912, 96 % of the Czechs in Bohemia and Moravia were registered as Roman Catholic. There were two Protestant bodies which were recognized by the state and in part supported by government funds. One was Reformed, the other Lutheran. They have since been united in the Evangelical Church of the Czech Brethren. An even smaller body called the Free Reformed Church was supported by the Congregational Church in the United States as a missionary enterprise. I met many outstanding personalities among the Protestant clergy, several of whom were preachers of great power. However, one could not escape the feeling that most of these men considered their chief function to be to so interpret Czech history as to make their people aware of the splendid heritage of the Czech Brethren. I also sought out a number of Catholic priests and I found them most friendly and willing to interpret to me the role their Church was playing in the country.

Both Catholics and Protestants placed great emphasis upon religious instruction in the schools. Each pupil was compelled by law to have one hour of religious instruction a week in the school. The teaching of religion was to be conducted by a representative of the faith in which the pupil was enrolled. As many of the Catholic priests and Protestant ministers had as many as twenty hours a week of such instruction and as they were also charged by the government with the duty of keeping the vital statistics of their parish, recording the number of births, baptism, marriages and funerals, they were of necessity serving more as government officials than as pastors to their people.

The children who attended religious instruction did gather more factual information about their faith than do the children attending our Sunday Schools in America. I was amazed to discover how much of the Bible the pupils could recite from memory in these weekly hours of instruction and how thoroughly they learned their catechism. Still one had a feeling that the pupils came out of this training with rote memory of Bible verses, church history and theology, with "religion" regarded as just another subject on a par with geography or history.

I did encounter intellectuals who seemed to interpret religion on the basis of the

broad humanitarianism tinged with mysticism. In the next chapter we shall see such an approach in the thinking of Tomáš G. Masaryk.[8] But this approach to religion found no wide acceptance among the Czech people at that time. They were born either Catholic or Protestant and planned to be buried in that faith. I was to find a somewhat different picture in the country districts of Bohemia and Moravia and a very different set of conditions in Slovakia. But my contacts in the cities led me to understand why so many Czechs became free thinkers upon their arrival in America.

Lessons in Czech History

The friends I made in Prague proved to be patient and painstaking expositors of Czech history and of its bearing upon the contemporary problems of the country. As they leaped back into the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries and brought me up to date, I found Czech history a complex story. However, by consulting such historical volumes as were available, by keeping my ears open to all accounts sundry, and by checking my friends' stories with the published record, the general outline of the picture began to take shape in my mind.

The Czechs set great store upon certain periods of their history and upon certain personalities bearing all the marks of greatness. The reign of King Charles I of Bohemia (1346-1378), also known as Charles IV, Emperor of Germany, is often called the golden age of Czech history. Unlike many of those who preceded and followed him on the throne of Bohemia, Charles showed a real love for the people of Bohemia. He gave a powerful impetus to the use of the Czech language which had then fallen into disuse. He founded the University of Prague, now known as "Charles University," in 1348, one of the oldest universities of Europe. As the number of students grew to 7,000, Charles gave to the Czech students preferential standing. He extended the boundaries of the Czech kingdom until it stretched from the Baltic to the Adriatic and its influence was felt all over Europe. He surrounded himself with artists who developed the Prague school of painting. He discovered Carlsbad (Karlovy Vary) and made of it a popular spa. He built a castle to house the crown jewels and other treasures known as Karlův Týn, and one of the bridges across the Vltava was built by King Charles and is named after him. During his reign the people prospered and wealth and luxurious living were wide spread.

Such luxury was to give rise to corruption and immorality during the reign of Wenceslas IV (Václav IV) (1378-1419). Such conditions in turn prompted the wave of moral reform associated with the name of Jan Hus (1373-1415). Hus

[8] Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk (1850-1937) – first President of Czechoslovakia (1918-1935), more on TGM in the following pages by KDM.

attacked the demoralizing corruption prevalent in all classes of society. He especially denounced the sale of indulgences by the clergy, a practice which was rife during the period when discipline in the Church was lax owing to the great schism within the Church and the rivalry for power between three popes. Hus brought upon his head the wrath of the ecclesiastical powers, with the result that he was brought to appear before the Council of Constance, charged with heresy and condemned to death at the stake. While the world thinks of Jan Hus primarily as a Reformer, antedating Luther by two hundred years, his countrymen then and now think of him as primarily a national hero who aroused the national consciousness of his people and stimulated the use of the Czech language. Consequently, when the news of the burning of Hus reached Bohemia it produced indescribable excitement and indignation. Roman Catholic priests were expelled from their parishes, siege was laid to the palace of the archbishop of Prague and he was forced to flee in dismay. The university declared Hus a holy martyr for the faith of Christ and ordered that henceforth the day of his martyrdom (July 6th) be observed as a national holiday.

For the next fifty years the country was torn with bitter strife. The Catholic powers and the German kings enlisted no less than a hundred thousand men to conduct a crusade against the "Infidels of Bohemia." At this critical juncture the nation found a leader of legendary prowess in the person of Jan Žižka z Trocnova. Žižka has been called the greatest military genius of his age. His armies of peasants and mechanics armed with iron flails and wooden clubs and protected with barricades of farm wagons and with his men imbued with the religious ardor of his battle hymn "Ye who are the Lord's warriors" made Žižka an irresistible leader of the Bohemian forces.

After this hectic period another outstanding figure was George of Poděbrady, known as "the Protestant King" (1458-1471) and, next to Charles IV, the most respected of the Bohemian sovereigns.[9] Eventually, however, divisions within the religious forces of Bohemia weakened the resistance to the growing strength of Catholicism and eventually the country felt the full force of the anti-Reformation and as a result lost both its political independence and its religious freedom.

The battle of White Mountain in 1620 was the event which finally sealed the fate of the independent kingdom of Bohemia. The Habsburgs were at that time placed on the throne and, under their auspices, there began a systematic purge of the Protestant elements in the population and of the nobility and of the intelligentsia

[9] Surprisingly, KDM omitted Wenceslas (907-c.930) the Duke of Bohemia, canonized by the Roman Catholic Church for his support of early Christianity in his country, the main patron-saint of Bohemia.

who formed the backbone of the Czech nation. By exile, execution and confiscation the country was rid of anti-German influences until of the Czechs there remained only a peasant population which these foreign overlords felt could easily be kept in subservience.

I was to read and hear much of this period when a Protestant country was almost completely Catholicized and its national culture almost entirely Germanized. The methods used were unbelievably cruel and drastic, but they were effective.

Ferdinand II, the conqueror of the Bohemians at White Mountain, wasted no time in inaugurating his program of extermination. On June 21, 1621, he caused the execution on the Old Town Square of Prague of twenty-seven Czech leaders, all members of noted families. The heads of twelve of them were set up on the tower of Charles Bridge in wire cages and left there for years to awe the populace. The lands of the Czech nobility were confiscated, a goodly portion being given to the Catholic Church. "Take, Fathers, take," this Habsburg king used to say, "Not always will you have a Ferdinand." Other estates were distributed to favorites like Wallenstein[10] who had been a general in the army of Ferdinand. The devastation of the Thirty Years War in Bohemia was unbelievable. Historians tell us that the population was reduced by execution, starvation and exile from 3,000,000 to 800,000. Farms were abandoned, houses stood empty. Fire ravaged 138 cities and 2,171 villages. The best manhood of the nation perished.

Among the population remaining, Ferdinand was determined that there should be "unity of faith and tongue." He was remarkably successful in achieving both ends. The Jesuit fathers and the German soldiery worked hand in hand. They went from town to town searching for books written in Czech, ransacking houses from cellar to garret. One zealot, Koniáš[11] by name, boasted that he had burned or otherwise destroyed 60,000 volumes. All books printed in Czech between the years 1414 and 1620 dealing with religious subjects were suspect.

Bibles were the object of an especially vigorous search and wherever found were relentlessly consigned to the flames. But they were not all found. People hid them in their bake ovens, in cellars, and in caves. There are even cases on record of Bibles having been saved by burial under a dong heap.

The custodian of the National Museum in Prague passed on to me a story of this period which, whether true or legendary, carries its point. A venerable and kindly man, he saw me looking with interest at an old Bible displayed in one of the cases in

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[10] Albrecht von Wallenstein (Albrecht z Valdštejna) (1583-1634) – a Czech nobleman in the Habsburg service.

[11] Antonín Koniáš (1691-1760) – a Jesuit priest, missionary, writer.

the Museum. Coming to my side, he said, "There is an interesting story connected with that book. Would you like to hear it?" And, without waiting for my assent, he continued:

This Bible is said to have belonged to a devout peasant woman at the time of the Jesuit persecution. One day she had it open on the kitchen table while she proceeded with her household duties. It was baking day, and she had prepared the dough for one of those huge cart-wheel loaves of bread. Suddenly she was startled by the sound of horses' hoofs in the court-yard. 'Soldiers!' she exclaimed. 'They have come to look for my Bible. Where can I hide it?' Her glance fell upon the mass of dough on the kitchen table. Quickly she made a hole in the dough, deep enough in which to hide the Bible, and pushed the dough, Bible and all, into the oven. The dragoons searched high and low, but went away disappointed.

Still another day the pious woman had been gathering the family wash ready to take to the brook, there to be scrubbed against the rocks and slapped with a wooden paddle. Already she had the clothes in a huge boiler on the stove, the water at a boil. Again there was the sound of horses' hoofs. This time, she plunged the Bible down into the boiling water among the dirty clothes. Again it was saved from the soldiers' hands.

Now you see why this Bible looks as if it had passed through fire and flood; it has!

And, with a twinkle in his eyes, the old man concluded, "You see, this Bible has been baked and it has been boiled. All that you and I have to do is to digest it."

Gradually, I came to understand why the Czechs were so conversant with this tragic era in their history. Not finding much of glory in their current circumstances, they had of necessity to turn to the past for satisfaction of their national pride. Here they found satisfaction in the golden era of their history, when Bohemia was powerful, free and Protestant. They further found a certain cynical satisfaction in emphasizing the fact that their national culture and religious faith had been destroyed by the same Habsburgs who now ruled over them. Not with safety could they openly speak against Franz Josef and the Catholic hierarchy, but they could and did speak their mind about Ferdinand and his successors, and about Koniáš and his Jesuit inquisitors; and thereby they partially relieved their bitterness. Thrilling historical novels had been written about this period and the works of such writers as Jirásek[12] were widely read throughout Bohemia. It was a desperate, heroic, but apparently losing fight that had been waged ever since 1620, a fight for political independence and religious freedom. By dwelling upon it, re-enacting the struggles in imagination, the modern-day Czechs were preparing themselves spiritually for a

[12] Alois Jirásek (1851-1930) – novelist, journalist, author of numerous historical novels based on Czech history.

resumption of the battle.

In the early nineteenth century the battle had seemed irretrievably lost. The Czech language had been driven from the printed page, from the schools, from the courts and from the streets of Prague. Czech was the language only of peasants and servants. The cultural life of the Bohemian people had been lost in a complete germanization.

Then began a remarkable renaissance. Spurred on by the revolutionary spirit prevalent in Europe in 1848, Czech patriots began writing in their own language. František Palacký (1798-1876) published his monumental *History of the Czechs.*[13] Karel Havlíček (1821-1856) aroused his countrymen by flaming essays on patriotic subjects. An agitation was begun for the restoration of instruction in Czech in the schools of Bohemia. A private society, *Matice školská* (Mother of Schools)[14] was organized to provide such instruction in towns where the government would not permit it in the public schools. Under the pressure of democratic movements throughout Europe, Emperor Franz Josef was forced to recede somewhat from the autocratic position of his predecessors. A parliament was granted, and the Czechs allowed representation therein. The Czechs organized a gymnastic society called the *Sokol* (The Falcon).[15] Ostensibly the Sokol was to proceed along the lines of the German *Turn Verein*, but actually it was also used to foster in the rising generation a pride in their past and a new hope for the nation's future.

The dual monarchy of Austria-Hungary[16] had been devised partly to keep the Slavic populations in their place. "The Slavs must be pressed to the wall," declared an Austrian spokesman at the time. Then, turning to the Magyar deputies present, he added significantly: "You take care of your hosts and we will take care of ours."

Yet by 1912 the Czechs had demonstrated that they were not to be crushed and many observers were beginning to suspect that they could not be kept in subjection much longer. Years before Masaryk, then a comparatively unknown member of the Austrian parliament, had uttered these prophetic words:

> Extirpate, Germanize – that has been the favorite policy of the Austrian government for generations. But our nation is showing itself vigorous and virile. It will not be Germanized. It will not be extirpated. If persecuted, it will find new outlets for its surplus energy. We shall never be content to be merely tolerated in Austria. We demand the right to be treated as equals with the rest of the citizens of the state and we insist upon working out our own

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[13] Published in 1876.

[14] Founded in 1880.

[15] Founded in 1862 by Miroslav Tyrš (1832-1884) and Jindřich Fuegner (1822-1865).

[16] Established as a dual monarchy in 1867.

destiny as Czechs without restriction or limitation.

Restrictions and limitations continued, but in 1912 there were signs of diminution. The Czechs used their own language, had schools, they were free to develop their own cultural institutions, their press, theatre, music and national organizations. The Austrian government was on constant guard for anything smacking of treason; Czech newspapers were frequently censored. The secret police covered any meetings that seemed suspicious. Czechs prominent in the national stirring knew themselves to be under constant surveillance; those ambitious for rise in government service found it wise to maintain a connection with the Catholic Church. Yet there were straws to show the wind was veering: the Jewish merchants in Prague began to speak Czech openly with their customers, Czechs were acquiring large business and industrial enterprises which a generation before had been entirely in German hands; the Czech status as peasant or laborer was giving way. They were on the rise economically and politically; and in matters of religious faith many were giving only lip service to the established church.

Czech friends began to say:

> Now we are biding our time and waiting the favorable moment to strike for a larger measure of self-government. We are so few, so small a group; we know that the solution to our problem must come as a result of some general European upheaval. Many of us are looking for aid and comfort to Russia, our great Slavic brother. Meanwhile we must make the best of the situation in which we find ourselves; our greatest necessity and our task is to acquaint the world beyond our borders with the condition of the Slavic nationals in Austria-Hungary.

Another thoughtful observer put it this way:

> Most of us are sadly resigned to the *status quo*, yet I am not so pessimistic as to abandon hope that Providence may yet have a good future in store for us Czechs and the other Slavs. What sustains me is a certain hazy impression that human development may at length find the need of a new formula, and then our time will come. Now we are under the spell of the German watchword FORCE. As watchwords, like everything else human, come and go, I pray that the Slavs may one day introduce another slogan – the doctrine of LOVE.

Chapter 2

I meet the Masaryks

In 1912 the English language was in such scant use in Prague that it was natural that an English-speaking newcomer should soon come within the family circle of the Masaryks. Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk was at that time one of the most influential professors at the Charles University of Prague.

Of the initials, T. G. M., by which he was widely known, the middle one stands for Garrigue, the maiden name of Masaryk's American wife. Charlotte Garrigue was born in Brooklyn into a circle of thought and culture. She was a "blue-stocking" who fitted easily into the life of a university professor. Together they raised a family of four children, all of whom were to be outstanding in personality and intellect. Each of them received part of her or his education in England or in America so that English became the second language in the home. Alice, the eldest child, studied sociology at the University of Chicago and was for a time in residence at Hull House where she came under the influence of Jane Addams and Mary McDowell. Quite naturally she thought and talked like a sociologist and a social worker. Herbert, the older son, was serving in the Austrian army at the time, and as he died during the war period, I never had the opportunity of meeting him. Jan, the younger son, served in the Austrian Army during World War I as an officer in the Supply Department. Later he lived and worked in the United States and learned to speak English like an American. I was to see much of him at a later period. Olga, the youngest, was active in sports, and was working in the Young Women's Christian Association just then being organized in Prague.

My manifest interest in the Czechs and Slovaks and my determination to learn all that I could about them gave me ready entrance into the Masaryk home, particularly as I was introduced by the American consul. As we sat there that first afternoon I felt an atmosphere of warmth and friendliness, but the small talk was carried on mostly by the young people. Although I found the Professor to be a very human individual, enjoying a good joke or an apt story, there was something about his very presence in a group that drew us away from the shallows into deeper waters. We young people contented ourselves with discussing the superficial differences between life in Bohemia and life in America but when the Professor entered the conversation we found ourselves driven back to the essential human fundamentals. After all he was a philosopher and a sociologist as well as a humanist.

Masaryk's personality and intellect were so impressive that I took pains thereafter to inquire about him at every opportunity and to read his life story and many of his

writings in order to understand the secret of his greatness.

Masaryk's origins were of the humblest. His father was a coachman on one of the emperor's estates in Hodonín, a small town in Moravia. He himself said that he grew up in such straitened circumstances that for a long time it never occurred to him that he could ever rise above the menial position occupied by his father and grandfather before him. He tried his hand at various trades; he was apprenticed to a locksmith, then to a blacksmith. This peasant boy was clearly destined for an education, and finally by dint of hard work in school and out, he worked his way through the *gymnasium* at Brno and took up the study of philosophy at the University of Vienna.

During this formative period, several significant developments took place in this young man's outlook on life. He became aware of the class struggle from his observation of the impoverished condition of the peasants and the contrast between their lot and that of the members of the Austrian Court who came to Hodonín on their imperial hunts. In the German atmosphere prevailing at both Brno and Vienna, he became acutely conscious of the Czech-German conflict. During this period too, he turned against the Catholic faith in which he had been reared. His study of philosophy was largely responsible for that, but his study of Czech history had also increased his antipathy to clericalism in all forms. In these years also, the foundation was laid for an amazing versatility of various language forms. Even in the *gymnasium*, Masaryk had gained a working knowledge not only of Czech and Slovak, his native languages,[17] but also of German, the language of instruction and of French, Polish, and Russian. To these, he was later to add Italian, Spanish and English.

To meet the expenses of his study, young Masaryk engaged in private tutoring. One of his pupils, the son of a wealthy Viennese banker, did so well under Masaryk's direction that when he went on to Leipzig for further study, he took Masaryk with him as a token of gratitude. This enabled the Czech scholar to realize his ambition to continue abroad his graduate studies in philosophy.

In Leipzig Masaryk met and fell in love with an American fellow-student,

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[17] Masaryk's father was a Slovak, his mother spoke German. Masaryk himself describes his parents in the "Talks with T.G. Masaryk" (by Karel Čapek, 1928) using the following words:
"She was originally from Haná (*a region in Moravia, today in the Czech Republic – note by DN*), but had grown up among Germans in Hustopeče, Czech was hard for her at first." (p. 37) And: "Father was a Slovak from Kopčany." (p. 38) Quoted from the English translation by Michael Henry Heim, Catbird Press, North Haven, Connecticut, 1995.

Charlotte Garrigue. In 1878 Masaryk went to America to be married, returning with his bride to share a rich life in Vienna. Charlotte Garrigue Masaryk played such a large part in the life of her husband and their children that more than passing reference must be made to this unusual woman.

It is not surprising that I stood somewhat in awe of the Masaryks – husband and wife. Any couple carrying on their courtship while reading aloud Buckle's *History of Civilization in England* and while discussing the relative merits of Shakespeare and Goethe were destined for life on a high intellectual level. Eminent scholar though he was, Masaryk could say, "Charlotte has a magnificent intellect, better than mine."

In the personality of Charlotte Masaryk there was a remarkable fusion of the culture of her native America with that of her adopted Czech country. Back of her were the finest of American traditions, and all her life she remained a staunch American. But she so immersed herself in the culture of the Czech people and gained such a complete command of the language that it never occurred to anyone to question the justice of her affirmation, "I am a Czech." She absorbed the history and literature and spirit of the Czech people. She familiarized herself with such literary figures as Mácha, Němcová, Neruda and Vrchlický, and was a devotee of the music of Smetana.[18]

While never free from the tension and excitement which always grows out of intellectual curiosity and political courage, life in the Masaryk family was happy and stimulating until the outbreak of World War I. Then the unity of this close-knit family was broken. Herbert died while serving in the Austrian army in 1914. T.G.M. exiled himself to carry on his phenomenal mission abroad; Olga went with her father to be his companion. Jan went abroad to America and to England. Only Charlotte and her devoted daughter, Alice, remained in Prague. Mme. Masaryk had now to worry about her husband, for he was under sentence of death as a traitor by the Austrian government, making the gallows a real threat should he ever venture to return to Prague. Soon Alice was arrested and imprisoned, and her mother, now quite alone, felt that her apartment was surrounded by the ever watchful military police. That this lonely woman kept her courage is shown by the kind of letters she wrote to Alice in prison. Here one finds lofty expressions of an unshakable faith not only in the ultimate victory of the revolutionary cause to which this family was

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[18] Karel Hynek Mácha (1810-1836) – a Romantic poet.
Božena Němcová (1820-1862) – a pioneer woman-novelist.
Jan Neruda (1834-1891) – a journalist, writer and poet.
Jaroslav Vrchlický (1853-1912) – one of the most prolific Czech poets.
Bedřich Smetana (1824-1884) – a composer.

committed, but also in the sustaining power which a vital religious faith can bring to one's darkest hours.

But the long period of worry and anxiety proved too much to bear, and by the time her husband returned home in triumph in 1918 to assume the presidency of the Czechoslovak Republic, she was a woman broken in body and in mind. One of Masaryk's first acts upon arriving in Prague was to visit his wife. She was in a sanatorium, and it was obvious that she had not many years to live.[19]

It had been in 1882 that Masaryk was called to the chair of philosophy at the Charles University at Prague. It meant a certain financial security for himself and his family and an opportunity to make his influence felt in this center of Czech national life. On the continent in those days philosophy was considered to be an obscure and abstract subject and previous professors at Prague had been content to handle it as such. Furthermore, they had been chiefly concerned with the German philosophers. It was evident at once that this young professor had a fresh approach to his subject and to the problem of life. In his lectures Masaryk dealt with such thinkers as Hume, Pascal, Buckle and Kirejevskij, the Russian pan-Slavist. He even explored the philosophy of the great Czech leaders and made Hus, Chelčický[20] and Komenský live again. It was not long before he attained the manifest approval of the students and the thinking public.

In 1886 Masaryk became involved in a literary controversy which for a time threatened his career. In the early nineteenth century, a Czech scholar named Hanka[21] claimed to have discovered some ancient manuscripts written in the old Czech language. The report of this discovery filled patriotic Czechs with great pride as it seemed to show the richness of Czech culture in the Middle Ages, as the manuscripts apparently outdated even the German *Niebelungenlied* of 1160, and to surpass that classic in the beauty of their style.

The epic of these manuscripts enshrined some of the legends, myths and traditions of old Czech folklore and gave them such authenticity that many of the leading writers, artists and musicians found in them material for providing a nationalistic slant to their work. The great historian Palacký, the artist Aleš, the sculptor Myslbek[22] and the composer Smetana all draw on this material in their work. They

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[19] Charlotte Garrigue Masaryk (1850-1923).

[20] Petr Chelčický (c. 1390-c.1460) – a religious thinker, a vehement warrior against violence.

[21] Václav Hanka (1791-1861) – a Slavic studies scholar, the first librarian of the National Museum in Prague.

[22] Mikuláš Aleš (1852-1913) – a prominent painter of Czech national history.
Josef Václav Myslbek (1848-1922).

made such legendary figures as Libuše, Šárka and Vlasta come alive in heroic proportions.

So firmly established were the national traditions of the Czech people in the epic poems of these manuscripts that it was a great shock to Czech intellectuals when late in the nineteenth century a group of scholars led by Gebauer[23] after close examination of these highly venerated manuscripts, declared them to be forgeries. There ensued what has come to be known as "the battle of the manuscripts" which was waged with unbelievable bitterness. Masaryk was one of those who declared that these manuscripts were forgeries. He was widely criticized, even denounced as a traitor and lost many of his friends. His landlord was so outraged that he asked the family to find other living quarters. However, Masaryk's position that the nation's pride in its past cannot be made to rest on a false foundation eventually was generally accepted.

Masaryk always held aloft for his people a broad, humanitarian ideal. He was convinced that the hopes of his people for the future would be realized only by hard work directed to the improvement of the educational status of the people and by bringing their science, literature and art to a level comparable with that of other nations. Masaryk was never a chauvinist; nor was he carried away by the blind pan-Slavism of many of his countrymen. The Czechs are a highly emotional people, and he was quick to detect in them a tendency to let patriotism spend itself in sentimentality. "Of course," he would say, "our young people are enthusiastic. Youth is enthusiastic by nature and without it nothing will be accomplished. But it seems to me more important to point out to our young people whither their enthusiasm should lead them. They must have firm convictions which they have reasoned out, not mere blind devotion to a cause."

The man had a positive genius for espousing unpopular causes. A case in point was the so-called "Ritual Murder Case" at the turn of the century. A young girl was murdered and certain anti-Semitic elements adroitly directed suspicion towards a young Jew named Hilsner. The murder was done just before Easter and an old superstition had it that for their holy day ceremony the Jews required the blood of an innocent girl. Popular feeling was aroused and under its influence the boy was arrested and brought to trial.

Masaryk felt that the accused boy was mentally defective and might have attacked the girl. But he was greatly disturbed that the charge of "ritual murder" was being brought against him. He branded as sheer superstition the theory of "ritual

[23] Jan Gebauer (1838-1907) – a philologist, Professor of the Czech Language and Slavic Studies at Charles University.

murder." In an open letter to a Prague newspaper followed by a widely distributed pamphlet, he called for a new trial in which the "ritual murder" charges would be ruled out of court. All of the anti-Semites, all the super-patriots of the land arose in wrath. The professor was denounced as a paid defender of the Jews; all manner of insults were hurled at him and the students were urged to heckle him in class.

Masaryk persisted and succeeded in having a new trial held at which the "ritual murder" charge was disallowed. The boy was found guilty and condemned to a long prison term, but Masaryk won his point. The "ritual murder" charge was dropped and was never again raised in Bohemia.

Eventually the professor felt it desirable to translate his political ideals into action and to that end become one of the Czech delegates to the Austrian parliament. His friends founded a political party which was called the "Realistic Party." To publicize Masaryk's views they also started a newspaper, *Čas* (Time). Never large, the Realist party did become increasingly influential as did the newspaper. In his political speeches as a candidate for office Masaryk made no pretense of oratory. He proceeded simply and unemotionally to expound the subject at hand. Nor did he ever down-grade his audiences. Even when addressing peasants he had no hesitancy in choosing such complicated questions as "The Nationality Problem in Austria-Hungary" or "The Economic Status of the Peasants." It was said of him that while he thought as a philosopher he talked like an ordinary citizen. He forebore weighty theory and drove the truth home by exposition, examples, comparison and by homely illustrations readily understood by his listeners.

In 1908 and the years following, Masaryk engaged in a bitter struggle with the ministers of the Imperial Court over their policy in the Balkans, especially over the annexation of Bosnia and Herzegovina and the accusations of treason brought against prominent Serbs and Croatians. His espousal of the cause of the southern Slavs and his exposure of the egregious blunders made by Austria's foreign ministers won for him the abiding friendship of the Serbs and Croatians.

I often discussed the situation of the Czech and Slovak immigrants in the United States with Professor Masaryk and his daughter, Alice, both of whom were familiar with the American scene. Once the Professor had these comments to make:

> The immigrant is too often shipped over like a piece of baggage and then is fitted into American industry as if he were just a new 'part.' He has little time or opportunity to become acquainted with the real America. The immigrant must make his life among his countrymen and in the associations and institutions that root back into the old country.... Among the children born in America there is an assimilation of an artificial and superficial sort. They become acquainted with the language, but not with very much more that

America has to offer. I should like to see them retain the best of their Czech tradition and then fuse it with the best that America has to offer. All too often, the worst characteristics of Czech life are united with the worst in American life, and that is why you have an immigration problem.

A close associate said of him at the time:

Masaryk has achieved great influence not because he has had great material resources at his command but because his inner resources are so bountiful. He is sincere, forthright and conscientious. He is indefatigable in his efforts and patient in his expectancy of results. He has so impressed the nation with his integrity and sincerity that no-one ever suspects him of selfish motifs.

To the Professor, religion was a vital question but he placed little faith in the value of the church as an institution. He would say:

I am enrolled as a member of the Protestant Church but I do not go to church. The church does not seem to contribute greatly to the welfare of mankind. Much of what they say in church seems to have no relevance to the everyday problems of the people. Many of their dogmas I do not believe, and their forms and ceremonies frankly bore me.

And our Protestant churches are too formal. They are too far removed from the vital interest of the people and too restricted in their activities by their government to accomplish much. Yet there is a great tradition. You must realize that from 1620 to 1791 the Protestant church was proscribed here in Austria. When, finally, the Toleration Patent was issued by Josef II,[24] many Protestant churches sprang up almost over night. During the intervening generations their simple faith had been maintained secret, in underground churches as it were, with meetings held in mountain caves and forest fastnesses. Ah! Those old Czech Brethren – they were real New Testament Christians! Would that there were more of them now! The chief contribution to be made by our Protestant churches is the giving of the Bible to the people and reminding them of our historical heritage, which is so intimately bound up with the Czech Brethren and their Protestant faith. And you will find many of our best citizens in the Protestant churches, small as they are …

[24] Josef II (1741-1790) – Emperor of Austria (1780-1790), issued the Toleration Patent in 1781.

Masaryk and Wilson

I had been a student at Princeton when Woodrow Wilson was President of the University and I was later impressed with the similarities between Wilson and Masaryk. Both were scholars in politics. Both were endeavoring to bring high ideals and a philosophy of government to bear upon public questions. Both made their initial appeal to the intellectuals among their countrymen, but were so able to express ideas in terms which the common people could understand that, in time, they were to sway multitudes as few men in history had done. Both were men of culture and erudition, conversant with the literature and wisdom of the ages, profound students and brilliant interpreters of history. Of the two, Wilson had the more polished style in writing and in speaking, although Masaryk, too, was the coiner of many a trenchant phrase. Wilson was an aristocrat in democratic America; Masaryk was a democrat in aristocratic and autocratic Austria. Wilson was a brilliant conversationalist, sure of himself in any group. Masaryk was more obviously diffident and reserved, a difficult man to talk to when he was not in the mood or when he was out of mood with the company and its conversational tenor. At the time Wilson was well launched on his public career and, as the President-elect of the United States, was already a world figure. Masaryk had already the confidence and loyalty of the intellectuals of his people but was just emerging as a leader of a nation.

In a few short years, both men were to have leading roles in the dramatic events of World War I. Wilson's greatness was already established but, in 1912, while one could be sure that in Masaryk there was an intellectual grasp and an idealism that made for greatness, one could not guess that so soon would he be given an opportunity to use his power of leadership for such great ends.

Chapter 3

Life in the country districts

Much of any description given of my trip to Borová u Poličky in the Bohemian-Moravian Highlands would apply to all of my travels up and down the land in 1912-13. During the months I spent in Prague I made a number of side trips to other cities which were of interest to me – Kutná Hora, Kolín, Pilsen, Brno and many others. Borová was to be the one place where I settled down for a stay of some length. After that experience I was to be constantly on the go throughout Bohemia, Moravia and Slovakia. Nearly always I traveled by train and that was a liberal education in itself.

I always traveled third-class. The third-class fare was half that of the second-class which in turn was half that of the first-class fare. The first-class compartments were usually almost empty and I was told that only government officials riding on a pass or American tourists rode in such luxury. Well-to-do Czechs were apt to travel second-class particularly on longer journeys. The rest of the traveling public was to be found in the third-class carriages. The seats were wooden but the cars were neatly kept, with smokers segregated from non-smokers.

The third-class ticket was open sesame to join in the general conversation and each compartment buzzed with gossip and comment. It seemed to me that every other sentence began with, "Ježíš, Marie a Josef" (Jesus, Mary and Joseph), a species of profanity with which I was to become very familiar. There is an inescapable fascination about profanity in a foreign language. Often when traveling in the same compartment with Slovaks who had been in America I would overhear one of them, while conversing in his native tongue, break out into a sentence or two in English. Invariably these sentences were heavily larded with American "cuss words," the first English they had learned from their bosses in the mine or in the mill.

I found the view from the car window a never failing delight. It was a rolling countryside with a broad expanse of fields stretching out as far as the eye could see. In a harvest season the landscape was a beautiful patchwork of the green, brown, and yellow of the crops. There were no fences, the fields being separated from one another by strips of sod called *meze* (borders). The only signs of industry were the occasional beet sugar refineries.[25] The forests through which we passed were clear of underbrush so that one could look through rows of upstanding pine deep into the

[25] The heavy industry being concentrated in the major cities and the mining regions of northern Bohemia and Moravia.

forests. The peasants were given the right to collect firewood from the forests and I often saw women carrying or wheeling great bundles of it. Under the supervision of government foresters an amazingly tidy appearance was maintained, in sharp contrast to the neglected tangle of most privately owned woods in America. One could see evidence of an intensive cultivation of the soil in the little patches of cultivated fields high on a rocky hillside where the average American farmer would scorn to try to raise a crop.

The railroads were owned and operated by the government, apparently with quiet efficiency. However, evidences of bureaucracy were not lacking. At each railroad station, even in the rural sections there seemed to be a superabundance of personnel. I could see porters, a baggage master, a ticket agent and a train dispatcher. All were in uniform, the train dispatcher being resplendent in a military cap, a red coat, and carrying a baton. A certain ritual must be completed before the train could depart. A bell was rung once as a warning, "two to get ready" and "three to go." At the third bell the conductor's whistle shrilled, the guards slammed the doors of the coaches and as the train puffed its way out the train dispatcher stood at stiff attention on the station platform. I counted six uniformed officials at one way-station. In America one would expect all of this business to be handled by one man uniformed in overalls, shirtsleeves and suspenders.

In the Highlands

The last stage of the journey to Borová was made in a little jerkwater train on a branch line which wound its way up over steep grades to the highland villages. A wet sticky snow was falling as I arrived. My host, the local Protestant minister, was waiting for me on the station platform, his hat and overcoat blanketed with snow. He was a good looking man in his thirties and proved to be gracious host and a most thoughtful guide. As his English did not take him much further than "How do you do," I had plenty of opportunity to use my Czech as I went about the countryside with him.

A twenty minute walk and we were at the manse to be welcomed by his wife (Paní farářová), a tall, striking woman of distinct charm culture. She spoke both French and English fluently and had established something of a reputation as a writer. They had no children, but the pastor's sister lived with them and they proved to be a friendly family group.

They had a large, well-lighted room for me. The bed was not quite as short as the one I had had in Prague, but still not long enough for my 6' 3". They provided me with a down quilt, but it was no longer so frustrating, for I had learned to curl up under it like a puppy.

This home was a very pleasant headquarters for my exploration into village life. Certainly I was well fed! The day started with a continental breakfast (rolls and coffee); then about eleven o'clock they would bring me "breakfast on a fork" (snídani na vidličku), consisting of an egg or some sausage; at one o'clock came a hearty dinner. At four or five in the afternoon we had "tea" (svačina) at which coffee and cakes were served; then at seven o'clock they served a light supper (večeře). Then if I were hungry at bed time I could have a snack. No wonder that I put on considerable weight while in Borová despite a prodigious amount of walking and cycling.

One afternoon I climbed to the top of a neighboring hill where I had a birdseye view of the village of Borová. Strung out along the highway for a mile or more were the houses, most of them cottages of whitewashed brick or stone, with an occasional frame villa. A tavern, a sawmill, a store, the schoolhouse and the Catholic and Protestant churches were clustered together. There were no farm houses as we know them, set down in the midst of the owner's land. A farmer's fields were scattered over the hillsides surrounding the village with the property of other villagers often intervening. A farmer would often have to walk several miles a day just to get out to his field and back. Life in such a village seemed very compact. And our isolated farms in the United States must have seemed very lonely by contrast.

The village schoolmaster was a helpful interpreter of village life. He explained how the population of the village was divided into several different types. First there were the tenant farmers who rented a cottage on a large estate and were employed thereon at a daily wage of 2.10 crowns (42 cents). Those who owned a small tract of land and worked it themselves were known as cottagers. There were in this village some farmers who were in fairly comfortable circumstances, owning perhaps ten acres of land or more. The schoolmaster told me that most of those who emigrated to the United States were cottagers. Tenant farmers could not afford the journey and owners of the larger farms had a good living where they were. But the cottagers could but eke out a bare subsistence there in the highlands, yet had resources sufficient for the journey.

It was interesting to note the way people greeted each other in the country. Among Catholics the customary greeting was: "Pochválen buď Pán Ježíš Kristus" (Praised be the Lord Jesus Christ) to which the proper response was "Na věky věkův, amen" (Forever and ever, amen). Protestant peasants used the simple "Dobrý den" (Good day!). When passing someone working in the fields, one was supposed to call out "Pomáhej Pán Bůh" (May the Lord God help you) which greeting the worker acknowledged with the words "Dej to Pán Bůh" (May the Lord God grant it). Members of the gentry and members of the cloth were greeted with the more servile

"Ruku líbám" (I kiss your hand). I noticed that when the local priest rode by in his carriage the peasants doffed their hats and bowed low in deference.

On every hand I saw evidence that this was indeed a poor section. The soil was rocky and poor and most people found it necessary to supplement their income to make ends meet. Many home industries had sprung up. On a hill above Borová I visited a weaver's cottage. There was only one room, and a huge loom barely left room for a stove and two beds, one for a lad of twenty and one for his mother. The homespun linen he was turning out was of a coarse variety bringing such a poor price that the weaver's daily earnings averaged but one crown (20 cents). The lad had a book stand propped up on the loom so that he could read as he worked. He had learned a little English and was as happy as a child to try a few sentences on me.

I walked over to a nearby village one day to visit a carpet factory. There were twenty people working in the factory itself, their wages being ten crowns a week ($2.00) for an eleven hour day. Most of the carpets were made at home on a piece-work basis, no less than four hundred people from the nearby village being thus employed. We visited one such cottage; again the oversized loom in the one-room dwelling. I watched two women at work. They told us that they made two rugs a day between them and earned an average of 20 crowns ($4) a week. The rugs were being made chiefly for export to the Balkan countries and retailed for 40 crowns ($8) each.

In another town we found a shop specializing in peasant pipes. These pipes have a long stem with a flexible mouth-piece so that the pipe can swing freely as a man works. No man in this district would be without his pipe. They are also useful in measuring distances. "It is ten pipefuls to the market town," I heard one say.

I soon discovered that those who had relatives in America, and there were many such, were eager to have me tell them about life in the States. I learned that there was a town in Minnesota which was populated almost entirely by people from Borová and surrounding villages. After my return home I had an opportunity to visit this town (Hopkins, Minn.) and when I could tell them in their own language that I had visited the little out-of-the-way villages from which they had come, their faces were wreathed in smiles.

One constantly encountered in Bohemia and Moravia people who had been in America. Without exception they were anxious to go back. One of them put it this way, "Here you have to work hard, but you cannot get ahead. Once a peasant, always a peasant. In America a man has to work just as hard, but there is an opportunity to better your lot and that of your children."

One day in a village called Široký Důl (Broad Valley) I had an opportunity to visit an elderly peasant who was known as a "Písmák" (Bible Reader). I asked him to tell

me of the old days when people first began to leave for America. He was only too glad of the opportunity for reminiscence. "There must be at least a hundred people from this village alone living in America. They are scattered all over the country: Texas, Kansas, Minnesota and Wisconsin. Most of them went out between 1860 and 1870. At that time the journey to America took fourteen weeks, so that when anyone undertook to go it was a great event. The neighbors would all gather at the house and they would stay up all night with the emigrants saying their tearful farewells. Then I would come in to calm them a bit and to have a word of prayer with them. But nowadays," he concluded, "they hardly bother to say goodbye to their friends. They just jump in a carriage and they are off for America in a cloud of dust."

I called on an old woman who had two sons in Nebraska. I found her sitting on the back stoop cutting up potatoes for her ducks. She was barefoot and had thrown about her shoulders an old and often patched man's coat. She was delighted to tell me about her boys. One of them had a hundred-acre farm, five horses and eight cows. As I looked at this toothless woman and her bare surroundings I realized that the story of her sons' success must have seemed to her like a fairy tale.

As I lived in the parsonage and had the opportunity to talk with the pastor and his wife everyday I was able to gain some insight into the religious life of the Highlanders, at least from the Protestant point of view.

Protestantism was relatively strong there compared with other sections of Bohemia and Moravia representing about half of the population, although the proportion varied somewhat from village to village. The church at Borová was one of the oldest in the area, the building being one of the first to be erected after the ban on Protestantism was lifted by the Toleration Patent of 1781. During the preceding period when Protestants were driven underground they had been able to keep their faith alive among these inaccessible hills and valleys. Consequently the Protestants there, being descendants of those who had been persecuted by the Jesuits, were naturally proud of their background and traditions. One heard much of Jan Hus, Chelčický and the Czech Brethren. In the religious instruction carried on in the schools especial emphasis was placed upon the historical background of the Protestant faith in Bohemia.

The parishioners at Borová appeared devoted, many of them walking three miles or more to attend church. But the services of worship seemed rather cold and stiff, possibly because the building was always as cold as a vault, the walls being three feet thick with no heating to dispel the eternal damp. At the service the men sat on one side of the center aisle and the women on the other. All of the women except the pastor's wife and one other wore kerchiefs. The minister was robed and evidently

laid great stress upon correct procedure. The sermons were generally expository and one had the impression that the main purpose of it all was to explain a tradition. As many of the parishioners had to visit the manse to consult with the minister about some documentation they required, he had in this connection an opportunity to become acquainted with the problems of his people and to counsel with them.

I was in Borová at Easter time. The Protestant church was filled to overflowing as was the Catholic church. There was a dramatic Catholic festival on Easter Eve. Following mass in the church the members of the congregation formed a long procession out-of-doors. At the head of it under a canopy marched the priest in his ceremonial vestments. He was followed by the village firemen resplendent in their uniforms, accompanied by a band. The women were in festive attire with their gayest kerchiefs. Each person in the procession carried a lighted candle and they wound their way up hill and down while the sun set in a golden glow and the paschal moon rose in gilded reflection. Finally the tolling of the church bell ceased, the peasants went to their homes, the great quiet of Easter Eve fell upon the land.

The Catholic Church made its appeal by pageantry and drama; the Protestant Church by a tradition which had a nationalistic tinge and which at its best could produce a saintly character like the Bible Reader (Písmák). Neither Church seemed to be making a serious attempt to relate the Gospel to the problems of that community of highland villages or to the lifting of life for this often poverty-stricken folk.

Later on I went on a pilgrimage to the "Holy Mountain" near the city of Příbram in Bohemia. On a hilltop on the outside of the city was a shrine dedicated to the Virgin Mary. The pilgrims usually approached it by crawling on their hands and knees up a long flight of stairs. We Protestants, with less accustomed knees, walked. At the top of the hill we found a number of covered galleries the walls of which were adorned with paintings representing various miracles wrought by the Virgin Mary of the Holy Mountain. One of them depicted a bolt of lightning falling to the ground on an impious artist who had drawn caricatures of the Virgin. Surrounding the church were a number of booths at which the pilgrims could purchase refreshments and souvenirs. At one, waxen images were for sale which pilgrims burned before the statue of the Virgin. A waxen arm or leg could effect a cure of an infirmity in one's limbs. A waxen cow was available for anyone who had a sick cow at home. "And that waxen heart – what is that for?" I asked, "heart disease?" "Oh no! – love affairs," I was told.

The church was crowded with worshipers, many of them prostrate in prayer. At the climactic point in the service, the statue of the Virgin Mary was raised aloft before the worshipers for their veneration. The statue looked like a little doll but on

its head was a crown of rubies and emeralds, the gift of Archduke Ferdinand[26], and its robe was of the finest silk richly embroidered. After the service the priest took the statue outside and the pilgrims filed by to kiss the hem of the Virgin's robe. My companion told me that often all the able-bodied men and women of a village would trek thirty miles across country on a pilgrimage to the Holy Mountain.

Later too I visited Tábor, the ancient stronghold of the Hussites, a city replete with historical associations. The town was founded as early as 1420 and many of the buildings date back to the early 16th century. This had been the very heart of the Hussite movement. In the museum there are many relics of Jan Žižka, the one-eyed warrior whose armies defied all of Europe. Tábor also played an important part in the life of Jan Hus, for it was near here at Kozí Hrádek that Hus lived and wrote after he was banished from Prague. Outside the Town Hall are the stone tables at which the Taborites of old partook of the Lord's Supper in both kinds, thus proving themselves Protestants years before the Reformation. On the walls of the historical museum are carved the famous words of Hus, "Miluj pravdu, braň pravdu, prav pravdu, slyš pravdu." (Love the truth, defend the truth, speak the truth, hear the truth.) In Tábor the finest traditions of the Czech Brethren seemed to come alive.

In Moravia

At one of their district meetings the Protestant pastors of Moravia arranged an itinerary for me, agreeing to pass me on from one to another. Through their cooperation I found my way to some of the most interesting and picturesque sections of Moravia. I saw the more important cities: Brno, Olomouc, Moravská Ostrava, Zlín, Klobouky, Slavkov and Hodonín. I found myself naturally gravitating toward the hill country on the eastern border of Moravia, for there the people were so poor that there had been considerable emigration to the United States.

I came, under the guidance of the pastor, to the little mountain village of Zádveřice. Our rendezvous was at Uherské Hradiště. Although this town was once the focal point in the defence of the Moravian Empire against attacks from the east, by 1913 it was a sleepy little county seat.

I soon learned that the area was noteworthy as having been the scene of the early labors of Cyril and Methodius who were the first to bring Christianity to this part of Europe. It was in 862 that Prince Rastislav of Moravia sent envoys to the Byzantine

[26] Archduke Franz Ferdinand of Austria (1863-1914), nephew of Emperor Franz Josef, heir presumptive to the throne, assassinated in Sarajevo on June 28, 1914.

Emperor, Michael III, asking for Christian teachers in the Slavic tongue.[27] Cyril and Methodius were selected for that mission. Although they were Greeks, these apostles learned Slavic from the Bulgarians at Thessalonika and later translated the Bible into the Slavonic, using an alphabet which has become known as "Cyrillic" and is still in use in Bulgaria, Serbia and Russia. Not far distant from Uherské Hradiště is Velehrad, said to be the place where these two missionaries first preached and where Methodius is buried. A "pilgrim house" had been erected to accommodate the thousands who make annual pilgrimages to this shrine. It was a pleasant walk to Velehrad along roads lined with blossoming fruit trees. Long before we reached the village we could see looming ahead the two spires of the seven hundred year old church. The ancient castle of Buchlov could be seen from Velehrad but the climb was steep, and my host reminded me that time was marching on.

Even more intriguing was the opportunity to see here the native costumes actually being worn. I had feasted on these costumes in the shops in Prague and was familiar with Uprka's[28] colorful paintings featuring the native costumes, but the use of these picturesque costumes was rapidly giving way before the advance of civilization's tendency toward the uniformity of western dress. Here they were with all their brilliant coloring of red, blue and yellow set off with exquisite embroidery and handmade lace with matching headdresses. The sight of young girls decked out so colorfully was to charm me many times as I journeyed through Moravia and Slovakia, but this was my first sight of them and it was an unforgettable experience.

As I drove on with the pastor up into the hills toward our destination the look of the cottages we passed with their whitewashed walls and thatched roofs was charming. Later when I had the opportunity to visit some of the families I found that these attractive looking homes were often cramped and squalid within.

Here as elsewhere in Moravia and Slovakia I found that a large proportion of the people had relatives in America and that not a few had been there themselves and had returned. All of the people were curious to see what a real American looked like. A meeting was called by the pastor for my special benefit. I spoke to them in Czech as best I could and then they asked me if I would say a few words in English so that they would know what the language sounded like. The meeting closed after

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[27] Cyril (Constantine) (827-869).
Methodius (826-885).
Michael III (840-867, Emperor 842-867).
Rastislav of Moravia (ca. 820-870).

[28] Jože Uprka (1861-1940) painter of romantic historicism and Moravian folklore.

a flurry of questions, for they wanted me "to tell them about America."

A visit to Javorník, a village near the border of Slovakia, was to be a memorable one. After a long, slow trip in a way train up into the mountains, I was met by the local pastor and we made the rest of the journey by "carriage." It is only by courtesy that our conveyance could be called a "carriage." It was more like an American hay wagon. It had no springs so that we jolted over the rough roads in a way to make my teeth rattle.

Our driver was a finely set-up young Slovak. He was clad in off-white homespun unadorned save for an edging of orange embroidery on the neckband of his blouse. He wore a small, round, narrow-brimmed hat with a cord of intertwined red and green around it. The men we passed on the road were similarly dressed. Most of them had their trousers tucked into their high black boots, and from a distance they looked like baseball players in uniform. Some of them, however, were barefoot and their trousers flapped about their ankles like pajamas.

For three hours we bumped our way up into the mountains. As we drove the pastor told me about his parish. For the past ten years there had been a constant stream of emigration from this area. Usually the men went alone at first, and found employment in the meat-packing industries of Chicago or in the steel mills of Gary or Pittsburgh or in the automobile industries of Detroit. Some came back home after a few years to invest their savings in a new house or a larger farm. Others came only to arrange to have wives and families join them, definitely throwing in their family lot with the new world.

The pastor told me that drink was the curse of peasant life. Even little children were fed bread sopped in brandy. As a result of the prevalent alcoholism the local school teacher reported that few of his pupils were of normal mentality. We passed two women on the road; one of them had a load on her back, the other a great bundle of fagots. All along the way we could see women working in the fields. At long last we arrived at Javorník to be welcomed at the door by *paní farářová* and a maid, both of whom were quite obviously dressed in gala attire for the occasion.

The next day we walked up to a neighboring village where about sixty men and women were gathered to meet me. They were most deferential to the clergy, some of them even pressing forward to kiss our hands. About half of this group had been in America and spoke of working in the glass works at Toledo, in a textile mill at Little Falls, N.Y., in a piano factory in New York and of course in Texas, Chicago and Detroit. They seemed enthusiastic about America, eager to talk of their experiences and were looking forward to going back. I found the Slovaks in this countryside to be fine-looking physical specimens, tall, smooth-shaven, open-faced, fair-haired. They seemed quite approachable, with none of the withdrawal often

encountered among the peasants in Bohemia.

Attendance at the church service on Sunday was a moving experience. I was shown to a seat in the front row of the gallery so that I might have a good view of the congregation. As the prelude was played on the harmonium the members of the congregation who had been assembling out-of-doors began to file into the church. First to enter were the men, followed by the boys. Their costumes were similar to that worn by our driver the day before, except that the white homespun suits were evidently their Sunday best with extra touches of embroidery on vests and shirts. After the men and boys had taken their places on one side of the auditorium, the women entered to fill up the other side as well as the gallery. The married women led the way, followed by the girls. Their costumes – skirt, bodice, apron and cap – were pure white with a touch of orange embroidery here and there. Each of them carried over her arm a large white shawl to be used to protect her costume in the event of rain.

The church building had been recently redecorated and those in charge had possessed the artistic sense to follow the dominant color scheme of the local costume, the walls were painted white, and a beautiful contrasting color scheme was provided by orange window panes, frescos on the wall and the letter of the Scripture verses all in shades of orange. Over the communion table was a white coverlet enriched with orange embroidery. That day I worshiped the Lord in the beauty of holiness and in the holiness of beauty.

In the afternoon I met a number of people who had friends or relatives in America. One young man showed me a snapshot of his sister who was living in New York. He asked me if I knew her and when I smilingly replied in the negative, said, "Well, if you do see her, tell her that you saw me." (As it happened, I snapped a picture of this man in his costume and when I was giving a stereopticon lecture in New York upon my return, I flashed his picture on the screen. After the lecture a young woman rushed up to me in great excitement to tell me that I had shown a picture of her brother, and "How is he?"

Among the Slovaks

The next day I hiked over the border into Hungary, bound for a little Slovak village where I was to stay for a few days. My companion and guide was a young Slovak who was returning from a visit in Moravia. He had a six-hour walk before he picked me up at noon and we tramped along together for another four hours. I was weary and footsore when we arrived at our destination, but my companion seemed as fresh as ever.

As we wound up the mountain trail we passed through a little village which was

hidden in the hills hard by the border between Moravia and Slovakia. People sometimes refer to this village as "the end of the world"; others use the expressive proverb "This is where the rabbits say good night" (Zde zajíce dávají dobrou noc). The roads from the Moravian plains ended here; beyond there were only mountain trails leading into Hungary. My guide told me that this was one of the favorite routes followed by Slovaks who wished to avoid military service by fleeing to America. He said that he knew of a town not far off where 250 of the 800 young men liable for military service had managed to find their way overseas.

As I crossed the border into Slovakia I sensed that I was in a different world despite the fact that the people I met were not essentially different from the Slovaks in Moravia whom I had just been visiting. I was now in Hungary instead of Austria. While the Czechs and Slovaks in Bohemia and Moravia were comparatively free from repression by the government at Vienna, the government at Budapest always managed to make the Slovaks conscious that the Magyars were dominant and domineering.

During a three hour walk from Stará Turá to the nearest railroad station my new host told me something of the conditions under which the Slovaks were living in Hungary. Instruction in the state schools must be carried on wholly in Magyar even in villages and towns where the population was 100% Slovak. As a result of having to study in an alien tongue, many Slovak boys and girls left school as soon as possible and never did learn to read and write in their mother tongue. This goes far to explain the general low level of their cultural life and the high percentage of illiteracy among them. I was also warned that if I showed undue interest in the Slovaks I would soon find myself under surveillance of the Magyar police.

As I met with Slovak leaders at Turčianský Svatý Martin, Žilina, Báňská Bystrica and Prešov, armed with letters from Professor Masaryk, I was to hear more of the rumbling discontent of the Slovaks under Hungarian rule. Some were very reluctant to speak freely about such matters as they were suspected by the Magyar authorities of "subversive agitation." But others did explain that the national consciousness of the Slovaks had been slower to develop than that of their "cousins," the Czechs, due to the rigorous hold of the Magyars over their minority groups. They said that Slovak leaders had to struggle under the handicap of having no Slovak school system and only a few struggling newspapers in their own language. So there had been bred in the Slovak people a more or less conscious sense of being ill at ease, of being regarded as inferiors and because of nationality, being thwarted in their efforts to make progress. That this is a contributing factor to emigration, all agreed.

I heard much discussion of the relation of the Slovaks to the Czechs. I attended a lecture in which the speaker strongly urged that the Slovaks make common cause

with the Czechs in the struggle for a larger measure of political freedom. However, I found no unanimity among the Slovaks on this point. The Slovaks seemed to be more faithful to their Church, whether Catholic or Protestant, than the Czechs, and some expressed the fear that too close an association with the Czechs might infect them with the virus of free-thought. One Slovak writer told me that a union with the Czechs would result in the loss to the Slovaks of their most precious possessions: their distinctive national consciousness and their religious faith. Thus early was I made aware of a division of opinion among the Slovaks and the Czechs which was to plague both groups for years to come.[29]

In Bohemia and Moravia I had as my mentors and guides Protestant clergymen, for the most part. I had no such entrée to the Protestant group in Slovakia who were for the most part Lutheran, and the few advances which I made to the clergy were not very cordially received. My contacts in Slovakia opened by Professor Masaryk, were chiefly among the intelligentsia: professors, teachers, doctors and literary figures. So I was led to look at life from a slightly different angle.

One of the most interesting men I met was Dr. Hálek, a Czech, who was devoting himself to medical service to the Slovak peasants in the neighborhood of Žilina. One afternoon I accompanied him as he made his calls. His first patients wanted to have their eyes examined as they were planning to leave for America. It was well that such an examination was made as the doctor discovered evidences of trachoma which would cause their rejection by our immigration authorities. As we made the rounds Dr. Hálek told me that the Slovak women seemed always to be bearing children or nursing them. Children were nursed for an extended period, often until they were old enough to run about. He pointed out to me some little tents which had been set up by the side of a field. He explained that the women went back to work in the fields a few days after childbirth and left their newborn babies under these tents so that they would be close at hand for nursing. In the cottages we entered there were plentiful evidences of the effects of poverty and drink.

At Ružomberok I had a most satisfactory interview with a professor who had made a special study of emigration. He, too, took me out to the villages, interpreting what we saw as we went along. In general he corroborated the testimony of others with whom I had talked as to the causes of emigration. The countryside here had a more prosperous look. The crops were abundant; the houses with their red-tiled roofs

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[29] Independent Czechoslovakia united the two groups in 1918, to be separated 20 years later by the Nazi occupation of Bohemia and Moravia, while the new "independent" Slovakia became an ally of Germany in 1939. Renewed after the liberation in 1945, Czechoslovakia finally split into two independent states in 1992.

were neater and more commodious.

We stopped at a village tavern to look in on a wedding feast. The celebration was in the second day of a week-long feast. In the crowd standing outside there were several men who quite evidently had been in America. Their clothes betrayed them and besides they looked us in the eye as if to say, "We are as good as you are, and we know it." This was in striking contrast to the humble, almost servile attitude of many peasants toward the "gentry." Sure enough, it developed that these men had been in South Chicago for three years working in a steel mill and had returned home for a visit.

As I traveled the length of Slovakia, it was clearly discernable that here again the basic reason for emigration was economic. Although conditions varied from section to section, on the whole one could say that the soil in that hilly country was so poor that one could not make a living from it. Accordingly, I learned that many Slovaks tried to eek out a livelihood in other ways. Some took up the trade of blacksmith or of shoemaker. Others became wondering tradesmen, setting out on foot to sell their wares or services: tin ware, wire work, pottery, glazing and the like.

Life was hard in these Slovak villages. But there were compensations. Sanitation and cleanliness might be lacking, but there was an unspeakable charm here. The beautiful peasant costumes were generally worn, although seen at their most resplendent in the market, at church on Sunday or at a wedding. The color scheme was fixed by tradition and was in beautiful contrast from village to village.

The gift of the people for color and for music seemed to touch all of life with poetry. Like all of the Slavic people, the Slovaks are not only lovers of music, they are musical. They have a wealth of folk songs which they sing while they work, rest, worship or make merry. There are sad songs and joyous ones; love songs, lullabies, carols and songs for dancing. In one form or another, music creates the chief diversion for leisure hours. Sometimes it seemed that the beauty and harmony of the simple village life was of supreme value, outweighing in importance the poverty, intemperance and political repression which were omnipresent.

As one journeyed through the land, evidence multiplied that emigration was one of the most important facts of life. I saw one train headed west in which a whole car was reserved for emigrants. At one stop the conductor called out, "All aboard for America!" and the waiting emigrants piled into the train and were on their way to Hamburg, New York, and points west. Each group left behind a number of tearful relatives waiving goodbye.

I traveled on to the city of Prešov in the northeastern corner of Hungary. I found it a distinctly Magyar city, although the country around about was Slovak. Masaryk had given me a letter of introduction to an official in the *Banka Tatra* (Tatra Bank).

Encountering a policeman I asked him for directions to the bank, speaking in German. I found several Slovak leaders there and inquired if someone could show me about the Slovak villages. One of them confessed that he was on the black-list with the Magyar authorities and dared not accompany me, but a young student volunteered to go.

We rode by train ten miles out into the country to a village from which I was told there had been much emigration to America. As we wandered down the street I saw a man sitting in front of a typical thatched-roofed cottage. He looked every inch an American. He was wearing a derby hat, store clothes and pointed yellow shoes. Greeting him in English I soon found that my conjecture was correct. He had been living in Passaic, N.J. for fifteen years and was an American citizen. When he asked me who was ahead in the American League I realized that as a baseball fan he was truly Americanized. He had come back to visit his father and mother and was remodeling their cottage so that they would be more comfortable in their old age.

As we were talking together a girl came out of the house dressed in the native costume. Her cheeks were so fresh and rosy and her costume so colorful that I could not refrain from commenting upon her beauty. But my American friend snorted, "That's my niece. She'll soon be out of those old-fashioned clothes, for she is going to America with me. You ought to see my daughter," he went on. "Wait, I'll call her." Then, "Mame," he called, "come here." Mame came, and I gazed at her in astonishment. She was decked out in flashy American clothes, her hair tightly curled, her cheeks thickly rouged and her nose snow-white from an overdose of face powder. And she was chewing gum! Recognizing me as a fellow countryman she was quick to greet me as such! "Why, hello kid!" she said. I looked from this creature to her old-country cousin and thought to myself, "I suppose they would call this pert girl 100% American."

I was back in Prešov in time for a concert in the park by a military band. While listening to the music and sizing up the promenading populace, I was suddenly button-holed by a man in civilian clothes. He first tried Magyar, then Slovak, and finally German. He was a police officer and wanted to know who I was and what I was doing in Prešov. He obtained little satisfaction from my stumbling German and as I disavowed any knowledge of Slovak, he finally led me off to police headquarters. There the Chief of Police gave me a thorough grilling, made me show my passport and other papers, and, discovering that I had been in Bohemia, became suspicious that I was some sort of a pan-Slavic agitator. Then suddenly he said, "But you visited the *Banka Tatra* this morning. What business did you have there?" Knowing that *Banka Tatra* was the local headquarters of the Slovaks, I replied, "Why does one generally go to a bank? I needed money." Apparently no one was

aware of my visit to the Slovak village, for nothing was said of that. Finally, after being detained for several hours, I was dismissed with a strong hint that it might be well for me to leave town as soon as possible. This I had planned to do, but it was distasteful to be told to leave; and it did not improve my already low opinion of the Magyar authorities to see the same detective at the railroad station at train time, presumably to make sure that I really did leave.

That was my last visit in Slovakia. From Prešov I returned to Prague to say my "goodbyes" and "thank-yous," for I must now turn my face towards home.

It seems appropriate to close the story of my first visit to the land of the Czechs and the Slovaks with a reference to my visit to Constance where Jan Hus was condemned and burned at the stake in 1415. I stood with head bowed in reverence before the simple monument which had been erected in his memory at the site of his execution. There was erected later a beautiful statue of Hus in the Old Town Square in Prague. It was there that the people of Prague gathered for their patriotic demonstrations on their memorable days. Hus is a name to conjure with among the Czechs not only, or even primarily, because of his religious convictions but because of the battle he had waged for freedom of conscience and for the right of the Czech people to develop their national life in freedom.

Five hundred years had passed since the martyrdom of Hus. During the past three hundred years the Czechs and the Slovaks had been under alien domination. Yet time and time again I had heard quoted the motto of Hus, "Pravda vítězí" (The truth will conquer). This was the indomitable spirit that inspired Komenský's great declaration of faith, "I believe that under God, after the days of wrath are passed, the government of thy affairs will return to thee, o my Czech people."

These are the people who had come and would continue to come to the United States. They have had much to offer to America and to the world, although they have passed through many "days of wrath." Their faith in the ultimate victory of the cause of truth has not been destroyed.

Chapter 4

American Czechoslovaks play their part

When World War I broke out in 1914, most Americans were excited and disturbed. Few, however, had any apprehension of direct involvement on the part of the United States, and until 1917 followed the developments in Europe with a certain objectivity. The Czechs and Slovaks with whom I was working in New York could not be so objective as they sensed the predicament in which their kinsfolk abroad were placed, forced to fight for the hated Austro-Hungarian regime against the Russians and the Serbs, their Slavic brethren. And when they had word of the imprisonment of so many Czech nationalists by the Austrian government, tension mounted on the East Side streets; denunciations of the government at Vienna were heard on every side. Helpless frustration enveloped them; the situation was unbearable but there seemed to be nothing they could do about it.

It soon became evident that there were practical measures which could be taken for the succor of their countrymen abroad. It happened that Emanuel Voska,[30] a prominent leader among the American Czechs, was in Prague during the opening days of the war. Professor Masaryk sought him out and confided to him his plan for the initiation of an anti-Austrian movement as soon as he could leave the country. "We shall need money to carry on our activities," he told Voska. "Will you go back to America and tell my countrymen there that I am counting on them to help finance this undertaking?"

It was not long before word came from Masaryk that on December 17th he had left Prague for Italy. His daughter Olga traveled with him as his companion, her reported illness and need for nursing care being given as the explanation of this journey, the third trip abroad for Masaryk since the declaration of war. From Rome Masaryk proceeded to Geneva where he maintained his headquarters through the greater part of 1915. It was here that he received a message from Prague, "Do not try to return in peril of your life." The die was now cast. Until the end of the war he was to remain in voluntary exile as a roving ambassador for the cause of Czechoslovak freedom. His acknowledged aims were to win goodwill for himself and his associates and the national cause; to establish relations with politicians and statesmen in the Allied countries; to keep in the foreground the inclusion of Slovakia

[30] Emanuel Viktor Voska (1875-1960), Czech American business man, also served as U. S. intelligence officer during WWI and WWII, died shortly after release following a 10-year imprisonment in Czechoslovakia.

in the proposed Czechoslovak state; to create an army from among the Czech and Slovak prisoners of war in Russia and to enlist from his countrymen living in other countries moral and financial support for the revolutionary cause.

So when Voska returned to the United States he was able to present a practical project which would unite the Czechs and Slovaks living there in a common cause – the liberation of their homeland. Judging by the reaction I observed in New York, this great idea was to encounter formidable difficulties. There was much suspicion, much disagreement between parties and individuals. There was even active opposition to the revolutionary movement on the part of the leaders.

As Masaryk's daring campaign to win friends for the cause of Czechoslovak independence showed signs of success in Paris and in London and began to attract world-wide attention, the obstacles to united effort on the part of the Czechs and Slovaks in America were largely overcome. No longer was the name of Masaryk known only to intellectuals, he became the one leader about whom all seemed willing to rally. He was above all parties. The people felt instinctively that his leadership could be trusted.

The revolutionary cause in America was further strengthened by the arrival from Bohemia of Vojta Beneš,[31] an older brother of Edvard Beneš. Masaryk had been anxious from the outset that other political leaders join him in exile to assist in carrying forward the revolutionary movement and to convince the diplomats that he had solid backing at home. Also the Czechs and Slovaks living abroad needed the leadership of more people coming fresh from the homeland and thus speaking with authority. This was not easy to accomplish. The Austrian government was reluctant to permit more Czech leaders to go abroad especially after Masaryk had made his public stand. Edvard Beneš did manage to secure passports for his brother and family on the pretense that he was going to America to investigate the design and manufacture of artificial limbs for wounded soldiers. Vojta Beneš had been a widely known and influential personage in Bohemia. An educator, he was a platform speaker of power and an ardent supporter of the principles which Masaryk had so long advocated. His presence here gave to the revolutionary movement both the standing and the prestige so necessary for its wide propagation.

A Czech National Alliance and a Slovak League were formed and became effective arms of the Czechoslovak National Council set up by Masaryk and Beneš with headquarters in Paris. Under these organizations leaders in the Czech and Slovak communities gave Vojta Beneš and Voska their whole-hearted support. Among

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[31] Vojtěch Beneš (1878-1951), educator and politician, died in South Bend, Indiana. Edvard Beneš (1884-1948), more on Edvard Beneš in the following pages.

those most prominently engaged in this work were Dr. L.J. Fisher, a Chicago physician; James F. Stepina and Thomas Čapek, bankers; Rev. Oldřich Zlámal, a Roman Catholic priest; Dr. Vincent Písek, pastor of the Jan Hus Presbyterian Church in New York; August Geringer, publisher of *Svornost*, the leading Czech daily newspaper, Vojta Mamatej and Milan Getting. The last two named were Slovak leaders whose service to the cause was so outstanding that later they were both named to consular posts in the United States by the Czechoslovak government.

The common people, the workmen and farmers and especially womenfolk were extraordinarily successful in raising funds for the support of the cause. This was done by bazaars and other community affairs in the various Czech and Slovak settlements, and by solicitation among friendly Americans. In Cleveland, $25,000 was raised; in Chicago $50,000; in Texas $60,000, and at one country-wide Thanksgiving Day, the offering totaled $320,000. The funds raised were carefully administered by Masaryk's central organization. Many of the leaders gave liberally of their own private resources. Masaryk himself reported in regard to the financial operations of his movement, "I doubt whether revolutionary propaganda abroad has ever been so cheaply carried on. We reversed the Czech proverb, 'Little money – little music' and got plenty of music from our little money." But when the war was over and Masaryk rendered on accounting of his activities, he reported that nearly a million dollars had been sent to him by the Czechs and Slovaks in America. "Without their financial assistance success would have been impossible," he said.

An important by-product of the movement on behalf of the liberation of the homeland was its effect upon the organized life of the settlements in the United States. Only those who have known them intimately can realize the extent to which the Czechs and Slovaks in America had been rent asunder by partisan strife. Slovaks vs. Czechs, Chicago vs. New York; Free-thinkers vs. Catholics; Socialists vs. non-Socialists; the country districts vs. the cities; one organization vs. another; one newspaper vs. another; one personality vs. another – these divisions had kept the people in a constant state of agitation and controversy. One wondered if a united program under any one leader would ever be possible. It was demonstrated, however, that in time of crisis old controversies can be forgotten in the interest of a common cause. Soon men and women of all parties were working together in a united patriotic program.

Another factor played its part in stimulating such united action. The Czechs and Slovaks in America, as at home, desired to establish a good reputation for themselves with other nations. They wanted to demonstrate to the American public that they were a people worthy of political independence. This they sought to accomplish by accurate press reports concerning the state of affairs in Austria for there were many

Americans who saw no reason for breaking up the Austro-Hungarian Empire into a group of small states.

Many Czechs and Slovaks risked their lives for the cause by carrying messages from Professor Masaryk to his fellow-conspirators in Prague. Before the United States entered the war, American citizens could secure visas for entrance to Austria and as many American citizens of Czechoslovak extraction had relatives in the old country they had an acceptable reason for traveling to Austria. A number of such men were enlisted as couriers and under instructions from Masaryk made several trips to Bohemia, carrying messages back and forth.

A little-known contribution to the Allied cause was made by the Intelligence Service built up by Emanuel Voska. Some of Voska's friends and acquaintances ascertained that the Embassies, Consulates and agents of the Central Powers were carrying on espionage and secret service work against the Allies here in America. With the aid of Allied officials Voska took counter-measures.

It was discovered that one of the leaders of the German espionage organization in America was the German commercial attaché, Albert by name. As Albert moved about New York he was trailed by one of Voska's men. Once when Albert was riding on the Third Avenue Elevated Railroad he carelessly laid his briefcase on the seat beside him. Voska's man who was seated nearby quietly lifted the briefcase while the train was standing at a station and disappeared with it. The papers continued therein disclosed the extent of the espionage and sabotage planned by the Germans: strikers were being organized in vital factories and ammunition works; incendiary bombs were to be placed in vessels carrying food, arms and ammunition to the Allies.

The account given by Karel Steiger of Omaha of his experience reveals the character of service rendered by these men and women. (Quoted by Vojta Beneš in his published lecture, "Revoluční hnutí v Americe," p. 299 ff.)[32]

Steiger was asked by Masaryk to visit Mme. Masaryk and Alice in their apartment in Prague to inform them as to his whereabouts and welfare. One can imagine the strain of domestic anxiety, alone, under which Professor Masaryk labored during these years of his exile. As a matter of fact, his family were under the closest surveillance by the police from the time the Professor's treasonable activities were known to the authorities, and later Alice was to spend many months in prison. Naturally Masaryk was anxious to relieve their minds as to his safety, and

[32] "Revoluční hnutí v Severní Americe; pátá přednáška cyklu Československá revoluce, proslovená dne 26. března, 1923." Published by Památník odboje, Praha, 1923.

accordingly asked Mr. Steiger to visit them in Prague. Steiger thus describes his call at the Masaryk apartment:

I went upstairs, rang the bell and in great excitement waited for the answer. A servant opened the door and I announced that I should like to speak either with Mme. Masaryk or her daughter. After a while Dr. Alice Masaryk came and I told her the object of my call; that I had come with a message from her father. She asked if I had an identifying document from her father. I replied that under the circumstances this was impossible, but that my passport would identify me. She took it, examined it carefully and said, 'Then you really come from America?' I explained the circumstances; that I had volunteered for this service and that Professor Masaryk had asked me among other things to bring messages to his family. Dr. Alice was greatly excited upon learning this, and, excusing herself, took the passport and went in to tell her mother.

In a few moments, Mme. Masaryk came. Her hair was quite white and her face showed the mental suffering she was enduring. She faced me squarely, looking me full in the eyes, as if endeavoring to read there whether or not I was trustworthy. Then she sat down and put to me a number of questions clearly designed to further verify that fact. Gradually her distrust was dispelled and finally she begged me to tell her all that I knew about the Professor, their daughter Olga, and all that they were doing in London. She seemed to drink in every word, and interrupted me several times to request that I repeat something which especially interested her, evidently in order that she might better hold that memory.

I left that apartment thankful that it had been given me to bring some small comfort to two suffering women.

Chapter 5

The revolutionary movement at home

Gradually there seeped through to us in America bits of news about events in Bohemia, Moravia and Slovakia. Piecing and matching these stories together, in the light of our knowledge of life abroad, there developed an heroic canvas of a people determined on freedom and prepared to work for it by the dangerous strategy of a secret underground movement. But not until the war was over and the Czechoslovak Republic firmly established could we see the complete picture of the revolutionary events between August 1914 and October 1918.

The Czechoslovak leaders at home were not disposed to submit tamely to the repressive measures of the Austrian government. Before Masaryk left Bohemia definitely, he effected a secret revolutionary organization which later became known as "The Mafia." Just how many people were connected with this organization will probably never be known, for no member knew the names of more than a very few of his fellow-members. After Masaryk left, Edvard Beneš assumed leadership of the movement at home until he was needed more abroad.

The story of the beginning of the working alliance between these two men who were to play such decisive roles in winning independence for their country and in the later guidance of its destinies as dramatically told by Masaryk himself (Světová revoluce, pp. 29ff).[33]

It was after my first trip to Holland shortly after the outbreak of the war that Beneš threw in his lot with me. I had known him but slightly before the war, although I had followed his writings in various publications. After he started to work at the office of *Čas*,[34] we saw much of each other.

One day I met him on the slope of Letná.[35] He was on his way to my apartment and evidently had something serious on his mind. In a few moments he burst out, 'We can't maintain a passive role in this conflict any longer. We must do something.' 'Agreed,' I replied, 'and I am already at work.' I told him what I was doing and, as we walked through the park toward the *Čas* office, we came to an understanding. How vividly I recall the scene. When we had come to the top of the stairs leading down to the bridge across the Vltava, I stopped and, leaning on the wooden railing, looked down over Prague. Visions of what the

[33] First published by Orbis, Praha, 1925.

[34] A cultural and political weekly founded in Prague in 1886 by Jan Herben (1857-1932).

[35] Letná is one of Prague's beautiful parks, located on the top of the hill on the left side of the Vltava, not far from the Masaryk apartment. (*note by KDM*)

future might hold for the city came before me. … But before political action could be begun, money would be necessary. Dr. Beneš made a quick calculation of his resources and there on the spot he promised me several thousand crowns. He had enough money to take care of his own expenses and this he did all through our revolutionary work together. We arrived at a working agreement with one another. Dr. Beneš was to remain at home as long as possible and was to be responsible for organizing communication with me along the lines used for so many years by the revolutionists in Russia.

The "Mafia" grew out of a series of informal meetings of Masaryk and his closest political associates in the early days of the war. They were held in the utmost secrecy at the apartment of Dr. Bouček, a lawyer and prominent member of Masaryk's Realist Party, and were attended not by more than a dozen political leaders, among them Dr. Herben, the editor of *Čas*; his associate, Dr. Cyril Dušek; Dr. Šámal, also a lawyer; Dr. Alois Rašín; Professor Drtina of the University; Dr. Josef Scheiner, leader of the Sokol organization.[36] At these meetings Professor Masaryk shared with the group the information he had received from Allied sources on his trips abroad, which, in view of the strict Austrian censorship, was most enlightening to the others. He also showed to the group copies of confidential reports of Austrian cabinet members dealing with the political and military situation. These documents, it developed later, were secured through a Czech servant of one of the Austrian cabinet members, who surreptitiously copied documents left on his master's desk and passed them on to Mácha[37], a Czech poet who was living in Vienna at the time. He in turn passed them on to Masaryk and later to Beneš. As a result, the Czech leaders were constantly informed as to the policies and programs proposed by the Viennese government. Later on, some of these secret orders were published in Paris four days after their issuance, much to the consternation of the Austrian officials.

Beneš and some of the others made frequent trips abroad during the early months

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[36] Václav Bouček (1869-1940); Cyril Dušek (1881-1924).
Přemysl Šámal (1867-1941) – In 1919-1938 served as Chancellor of the President, active in the resistance during the Nazi occupation, perished in prison in Berlin.
František Drtina (1861-1925) – Professor of philosophy and pedagogy; Josef Scheiner (1861-1932).
Alois Rašín (1867-1923) – Secretary of Treasure in the first years of the Czechoslovak Republic, assassinated in 1923.

[37] Most likely Josef Svatopluk Machar (1864-1942) – journalist, poet, prose writer, in 1889-1918 lived in Vienna, a friend of T. G. Masaryk, one of his cooperators in the Realist political party and the *Čas* journal.

of the war, chiefly for the purpose of securing English and French newspapers which they then smuggled across the border to use for journalistic purposes in *Čas* and other Czech papers and for private circulation.

There and until September 1915 when he too was forced to leave, Beneš assumed responsibility for organizing the revolutionary movement at home. It was a surprise to Masaryk's older associates that he should place so much responsibility upon a young and politically inexperienced man, but it was not long before all concerned recognized his organizing genius, and gave him the utmost loyalty.

In the early months of the war, Beneš managed to make two trips to Switzerland to confer with Masaryk, using forged passports. But that was dangerous business. An elaborate system of code messages was worked out and a group of couriers recruited, most of them Czech residents of Switzerland. Messages were concealed in umbrella handles and fountain pens, between the soles of shoes, within the covers of time tables and even in cavities of false teeth. Foreign newspapers were smuggled in by using trunks with false bottoms. It testifies to the bravery and ingenuity of these couriers that, in the four years during which they carried on their activities, there were only two arrests by the Austrian authorities and not a single case of betrayal.

The service thus rendered was invaluable. The people at home were given news of the success of Masaryk's propaganda abroad and of the progress of the Allied cause on the field of battle, all of which was withheld by Austrian censorship. Valuable information concerning the military movements of the Central Powers was conveyed to the Allied authorities. When the Czechoslovak Legion was formed in Russia, communication was established with the leaders of the Mafia in Bohemia, by way of Copenhagen. Some of the Czechoslovak Legionnaires made repeated trips from Russia through the Austrian lines to Bohemia and returned. During the black days of 1915 and 1916, the Mafia was the means of strengthening the morale of the people, while in 1917 and 1918, when Austria was showing signs of cracking, the Mafia was able by increasingly bold and overt action to prepare the people for open revolution and the overthrow of the Habsburg regime.

For the conspirators at Prague one most important and difficult task was to convince other outstanding Czech leaders that Masaryk's proposed course of action was wise. There were some among them who placed all their trust in Russia. They felt that the Russian army would overwhelm Austria and that the Kingdom of Bohemia would be restored under Russian auspices, perhaps with one of the Grand Dukes on the throne. Masaryk, on the contrary, sure from the outset that Russia was a broken reed, felt that Bohemian freedom would be accomplished, if at all,

through the instrumentality of France and England. Dr. Karel Kramář,[38] editor of one of the leading Czech newspapers and head of one of the conservative political parties, was a strong Russophile, and it was due largely to the persuasive powers of Beneš that his support was finally won. It was natural enough for political leaders to be hesitant in supporting Masaryk's movement. Not only was it extremely dangerous, but to those so long accustomed to the invincible power of the Empire, the very idea seemed fantastic and impossible. Gradually, however, most of the significant political leaders were won over and those who had not been originally initiated into the secret processes of the Mafia, rallied to join the conspirators when the time for open action arrived.

After Masaryk took his open stand, those who were known to be his associates and sympathizers came under the strongest suspicion by the authorities. Beneš in his "War Memoirs" (pp. 65ff)[39] gives one instance of the nature of this activity. In May 1915, a courier arrived from Switzerland bringing with him one of the false-bottomed trunks filled with seditious material. There were a number of copies of the first issue of *La Nation Tcheque*, published in Paris, some copies of a memorandum prepared by Masaryk for the English press entitled "Independent Bohemia," and a report concerning the organization of the Czech Legion in Russia. A meeting of the Mafia was called at the home of Dr. Šámal and was attended by Dr. Kramář, Dr. Rašín, Dr. Scheiner, Dr. Hajn,[40] in addition to Beneš and Šámal. Copies of *La Nation Tcheque* were distributed to those present, and Dr. Kramář slipped his copy into his breast pocket. The men were discussing current political events when Scheiner was called to the telephone and informed that soldiers were making a search of his home. "It was a critical moment," wrote Beneš. "If the police had known where Dr. Scheiner was they would have been able to catch us all at one swoop and seize our documents as well." Dr. Šámal gathered together the documents and destroyed them, then got together all of the money he had in the house and prepared to flee. Scheiner decided that he would try to escape to Russia if possible. The men dispersed in the greatest agitation. Early the next morning Scheiner was arrested as he was about to enter his apartment and was taken to Vienna. Dr. Kramář was also arrested when he returned to his home and the copy

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[38] Karel Kramář (1860-1937) – Prime minister of the first Czechoslovak government in 1919.

[39] KDM quotes here from the English translation ("My War Memoirs") published in 1928 in London and Boston. Originally published in Prague under the title "Světová válka a naše revoluce: vzpomínky a úvahy z bojů za svobodu národa." (Orbis, Praha. 1928)

[40] Antonín Hajn (1868-1949) – member of the Czechoslovak parliament 1918-1935.

of *La Nation Tcheque*, which they found in his pocket, was most incriminating evidence. Not long afterwards Dr. Rašín was also arrested.

The Masaryk home was under constant surveillance; every visitor was shadowed. When Herbert Masaryk, the eldest son, died, the funeral services were attended by a large group of secret service men, the thought evidently being that the exiled Professor would seek to communicate with his wife at the time of their bereavement. Alice Masaryk was imprisoned for a long period in the hope that such measures might induce her father to return. The danger in which his family lived was the hardest thing Masaryk had to bear. He was often sorely tempted to return. "They would hang me, of course," he said to Beneš. "But at least I would see my wife again…. And perhaps my hanging would startle our people into more decisive action."

That Beneš himself was not molested was due to two circumstances: first, not having been previously active in politics he was not known to the police; and, second, the name Beneš is such a common one that the authorities had difficulty in tracing him. When word came back from the Austrian secret service in Switzerland that a man named Beneš was acting as Masaryk's representative in Prague, a dozen men of that name were apprehended, but apparently no suspicion fell on Edvard Beneš, the young Docent at the Business School.

But the time came when Beneš could no longer remain in such obscurity. Through friends in the police department he even had a chance to see the dossier titled with his own name and he found it sufficiently accurate as to convince him that the time had come for flight. Dr. Amerling,[41] a friend of student days, was serving as a medical officer in the military garrison at Asch,[42] a few miles from the Bavarian border, and Beneš decided to ask his help in crossing the frontier. Beneš feared that his falsified passport would be detected by the Austrian authorities, but felt that it might pass muster with the German officials.

Dr. Amerling himself tells of the manner of the escape in a chapter he contributed to a book of reminiscences of the life and work of Dr. Beneš published upon the occasion of his fiftieth birthday in 1934. ("50 let Edvarda Beneše" pp.104ff)

One day late in August 1915 a bell-boy came to my hotel room at six o'clock in the morning and announced that there was a gentleman downstairs in the lobby who wanted to see me and who had given him a letter to be delivered to me. Tearing open the envelope, I

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[41] Karel Amerling (1886-1964) in "50 let Edvarda Beneše: vzpomínky, svědectví, úvahy." (Československá obec legionářská, Praha, 1934)

[42] The town of Aš in the westernmost tip of Bohemia.

found a card reading 'Dr. Edvard Beneš, docent.' I instructed the boy to show the gentleman to my room and, in few minutes, Beneš' smiling face appeared at the door. 'Are you fleeing?' I asked when he had crossed the door. 'Yes. They're after me. I must get away, and I want you to help me.' Not wishing to discuss the matter in a hotel room, we agreed upon a rendezvous in the park and after a while, I met him there and we arranged the details.

Asch was only a few miles from the Bavarian border, and we officers often used to cross over to sample Munchner beer sold in the Bavarian taverns. So I knew a shortcut that took one through the forest to the nearest Bavarian town. I was also acquainted with the disposition of the border patrols and felt that it would be a simple matter for Beneš with my guidance to slip through. I drew a map for him of the paths of the woods and agreed to meet him a few days later and guide him over.

On September 1st we met as agreed and set out through the woods. I walked about fifty feet ahead as to give warning if one of the frontier guards should put in an appearance. After we had walked a little way, I saw a soldier coming down the path towards us. I signaled behind my back and Beneš jumped aside in the woods to hide until the danger was past. The soldier saluted me and I detained him by passing the time of the day. Then, to give a reason for my presence there, I asked the way to a certain Bavarian village. He volunteered to show me the way and walked with me some distance down the trail to a place where another path branched off and sent me on my way. I watched to see which way he went, and when I saw him going off in another direction, I hurried back to the spot where I had left Beneš hiding in the woods. I gave our pre-arranged signal whistling the fanfare from the opera *Libuše*. But there was no response. I hurried on to the Bavarian village and found that a train had pulled out a few minutes before, but I found no trace of Beneš. I hoped that somehow he had managed to catch that train, but I confess that I was anxious as I returned to my quarters at Asch.

To my great relief a few days later arrived from Switzerland containing our agreed-upon code message, 'The L___ family is on its way to Switzerland, and all is well.'

It was not until after the Peace Conference[43] that I heard from Dr. Beneš that he had tired of waiting for me to return and, thinking that there would not be two guards coming along so close together, he had followed the course I had mapped out for him and had arrived at the railroad station across the border just in time to board the train.

After Dr. Beneš' departure, Dr. Šámal assumed the leadership of the "Mafia," and so successful was the group in keeping in touch with the revolutionists abroad that they were able to parallel the overt acts there with secret preparations at home so that, by the time Austria collapsed, the leaders both at home and abroad were ready to assume the government of their own affairs on the basis of a program already mutually agreed upon.

[43] Paris – Versailles Peace Conference, 1919.

Chapter 6

Diplomatic victories abroad

Prof. Masaryk is speaking:

Another impression, which became decisive, as far as my own course was concerned, was made by our Czech soldiers. When I saw how unwillingly these boys went off to the front, and heard how many of them refused to fight and gave themselves up to the Russians, I was greatly impressed. When I observed that it was not the political leaders, but the common soldiers who carried the Czech colors when they went marching off to the railroad station, and wrote in chalk on their cars, 'Fresh meat for Russia,' I was convinced that here we had the beginnings of the revolutionary movement that sprang instinctively from the common people. I felt it my duty to band together some of our political leaders and plan for action, especially when I saw how our soldiers and common people were being hounded, persecuted and executed for their own sympathy for Russia. Certainly we who had voiced the revolutionary ideas on which the masses of the people were acting could not remain idle.

I made two trips to Holland to discover what was really going on in the outside world, and to establish connections with friends in Paris and London. Then I planned to go to Rome and return again to Prague. On my way I stopped at Geneva to consult with Professor Denis[44] of Paris, and it was there, just as I was about to set out for home, that I received a warning from our underground railroad, 'Do not return.'

It was well that Masaryk did not return to Bohemia, for the Austrian secret service had all their plans laid for his arrest and imprisonment. From that time on, Masaryk kept in touch with developments at home through the secret revolutionary organization which he had set up. But he directed his main efforts to winning friends for his country's cause in the Allied capitals.

Masaryk started his work by approaching Czechs and Slovaks living abroad. His aim was to organize them in such a way that they might help to formulate the demands of the Czechs and Slovaks for independence and make known these demands in their adopted countries. Thus, in Paris, he planned to capitalize on the traditional connections between the Bohemians and the French. In London, in 1915, he saw an opportunity to press his cause by means of the five hundredth anniversary of the martyrdom of Hus, whose connections with the English Wyclif were very close. In the United States, as we have seen, he aimed to unite the Czechs

[44] Ernest Denis (1849-1921) – French historian, author of several scholarly publications regarding Czech history – among others.

and Slovaks, establish friendly relations with the other Slavs, carry on an anti-German propaganda, and secure the funds necessary to finance the movement. Before long there were established in Paris two journals, *Na Zdar*, published in Czech for the Parisian Czechs and for secret consumption in Bohemia, and *La Nation Tcheque*, edited by the great Czechophile, Professor Denis, and designed to influence French opinion.

In 1915, Masaryk delivered a series of lectures on central European problems at the University of London, which served to place his cause before the public. Similar lectures at the Sorbonne in Paris, and numerous articles and interviews in French and English newspapers and magazines, gave him considerable publicity. At a later date, Masaryk, through the efforts of his friends, Seton-Watson and Wickham Steed,[45] was appointed Professor at King's College, Cambridge. With their help, too, he founded and published in London a magazine called *The New Europe*. Through this medium, attention was focused upon the problem of central Europe, and the necessity for destroying the Austro-Hungarian Empire was impressed upon the English people, most of whom regarded the war as directed principally against Germany and had no conception of the importance of the Austro-Hungarian question.

Meanwhile there was effected the organization of the Czechs and Slovaks of France, Switzerland, Italy, England and America into a single revolutionary body at the head of which stood the Czechoslovak National Council with headquarters in Paris. Masaryk, Beneš (who had meanwhile also fled from Bohemia) and Štefánik[46] were the officers and leaders. One of the first acts of this National Council was the publication, in the name of all the Czechoslovaks living in foreign lands, of a declaration that the only satisfactory outcome of the war would be the assurance of complete independence for the Czechoslovaks. This declaration had the effect of uniting the Czechoslovaks themselves in their war aims, and also of appreciably influencing public opinion in the Allied and neutral countries, where most people knew little or nothing about conditions in central Europe.

Early in the development of the revolutionary activities and in their negotiations with friends made abroad and with compatriots both at home and abroad Masaryk and his associates emphasized the necessity of united action by the Czechs and the

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[45] Robert William Seton-Watson (1879-1951) – historian of central and eastern Europe. Henry Wickham Steed (1871-1956) – journalist and historian, foreign correspondent of British newspapers reporting often from central and eastern Europe.

[46] Milan Rastislav Štefánik (1880-1919) – Slovak astronomer, diplomat, politician, high ranking military officer

Slovaks. The close ties of language, culture and traditions made united objectives and action a natural procedure.

The more thoughtful leaders among the Slovaks saw clearly that only by making common cause with the Czechs could they hope to win political freedom for their people. Opinion on this point was by no means unanimous among the Slovaks; there were many who pressed for a greater or lesser degree of autonomy for the Slovaks in the new state they hoped to establish. Sentiment for Slovak autonomy was especially strong among the Slovaks living in the United States. Later, when he was in America, Masaryk paid especial attention to this group and felt that he had arrived at a satisfactory working arrangement in the so-called "Pittsburgh Agreement" of 1917. The relations between the Czechs and the Slovaks during the years of the Republic were harmonious, but the autonomists among the Slovaks were never silenced. However, during the struggle for independence the name "Czechoslovak" became symbolic of the union of the two nationalities in one nation.[47]

As we shall see, at the time of the Nazi occupation Slovakia was separated from Bohemia and Moravia and an "independent" country of Slovakia set up under the protection of the Reich. This arrangement certainly did not give the Slovaks the "autonomy" they had talked so much about. At the end of World War II and liberation of the country from Nazi occupation, the Czechs and the Slovaks were once again united in the Republic.

The inclusion within the Republic of Czechoslovakia of "Sub-Carpathian Ruthenia" was not the direct result of Masaryk's diplomatic negotiations. This small group of Ruthenians who occupied a tiny area at the very eastern tip of the Republic had, before the war, been incorporated within the bounds of Hungary. They had not been happy with that arrangement so they petitioned the Peace Conference for inclusion in the new Republic of Czechoslovakia. They maintained that as they were a Slavic group such an alignment would be most congenial to them. The Czechoslovak leaders acquiesced in this arrangement, and it proved to be a happy solution as long as it lasted. However, in 1945 when Czechoslovakia was reconstituted, the Soviet Union annexed Sub-Carpathian Ruthenia despite the pledge made by Stalin that the boundaries of Czechoslovakia would remain as they had been before the German occupation.

In all his speaking and writing, Masaryk did not confine himself solely to the

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[47] The terms *Czechoslovak* and *Czechoslovakia* are used throughout the balance of this book save where reference is made to one or another of the two nationalities. (*note by KDM*)

Czechoslovak cause, but endeavored to make it clear that the claims of the Czechoslovaks for independence were an important part, but only a part of a larger cause – that of breaking the hold of the Teuton Habsburg upon the smaller nations of Europe. Only by the establishment of smaller states on the principle of self-determination of nationalities, could the German *Drang nach Osten* planned to stretch from Berlin to Baghdad via Austria-Hungary be effectively blocked.

Masaryk was dedicated to a new Europe. In the defeat of Germany he envisioned the end of militarism, autocracy and arrogant nationalism. He hoped that a new day would dawn in which every people would be free to govern themselves, and when national rivalries and hatreds would be abated sufficiently to enable the separate states to cooperate freely in a unified European economy. He even envisioned a new post-war Germany and a new republican Austria cooperating with their neighboring states.

Masaryk pressed the cause of the Poles and Yugoslavs as well as that of the Czechoslovaks, and therefore had their support at every point. Furthermore, he was careful to keep his revolutionary organization financially independent of any Allied government, and thus avoided the danger of being regarded as a mere tool of Allied propaganda.

In the early months of his exile, Masaryk did his best to induce some other influential Czech leaders to leave Prague and join him. Few were able or willing to exile themselves as he had done, but men to match this hour of need and opportunity rose up eventually. From the beginning of the open propaganda in the Allied countries, two names were constantly associated with that of Masaryk as fellow officers of the Czechoslovak National Alliance. They were Edvard Beneš and Milan Štefánik.

We have already noted how Masaryk and Beneš came to be so closely associated in the revolutionary movement and have described the yeoman service which Beneš rendered in connection with the work of the "Mafia." But it was in connection with the diplomatic campaign on behalf of the Czechoslovak cause in the Allied capitals, that Edvard Beneš displayed the unique qualities of statesmanship which made him so powerful in the movement and were to earn for him the acclaim not only of his own countrymen but of the entire world.

Masaryk and Beneš supplemented each other admirably. Masaryk was a philosopher, a student of political affairs, and an astute judge of men and affairs. Beneš shared his leader's philosophical approach to political problems, but was distinctly more the man of action, who could be depended upon to work out in detail the principles upon which they had agreed. He was a prodigious worker, and furthermore had the ability to establish and maintain friendly contacts with an ever-

widening circle of influential persons who came to admire this young Czechoslovak and to have great faith in his penetrating analyses of the current political scene.

As long as Masaryk was in Western Europe he maintained headquarters in London while Beneš centered his activities in Paris. Frequent conferences and a continuous correspondence were maintained between the two men, and a remarkable sense of cooperation and understanding grew up between them. When Masaryk left for Russia and later transferred his field of activity to the United States, the responsibility for carrying on the movement in Paris, London and Rome through the last critical months of the war fell upon Beneš. Upon the shoulders of this young man, not yet thirty-five, was placed the chief responsibility for safeguarding the interests of Czechoslovakia at the conference which outlined the terms of the Armistice and of the peace. He was able, wise, of unquestionable integrity.

Milan Štefánik was a Slovak who had established himself in Paris ten years before the war as an astronomer. He had become a French citizen, and joined the French army as an aviator. However, he had not forgotten his native land, and he became immediately interested in seeing to it that Czechs and Slovaks living in France were not treated as Austrian subjects, but given an opportunity to enlist in the French army. His was the organizing genius back of the formation of the Czechoslovak Legion in France and of a similar group in Italy. When the United States entered the war he was anxious that Americans of Czechoslovak extraction join the Czechoslovak Legion in France, but in this he was disappointed, for the young Americans of Czechoslovak extraction preferred to serve in the American army.[48]

Štefánik established contact with Masaryk and Beneš soon after they came to Paris and they welcomed the offer of his services; first because he was a Slovak, and secondly because of his inescapable enthusiasm for the cause. Štefánik was not well versed in the ways of practical politics, but he added a dramatic quality to the movement that the two professors appreciated, and his cooperation with them did much to increase the confidence of the Slovak element both at home and in America. His was a pitifully tragic end, his airplane crashing him to death on the soil of his beloved Slovakia on his first trip to his liberated homeland.

The scope and significance of the program carried on by these leaders was summarized by Masaryk in his memoirs:

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[48] There were, however, a significant number of Czech Americans who volunteered to join the Czechoslovak Legion in France, notably from Cleveland as documented for instance in the Ladislav Křížek Papers, Immigration History Research Center, University of Minnesota.

We made use in our diplomacy of their participation in the world war. The National Council abroad was an organization of Czechoslovak political leaders who decided to carry on an open revolutionary movement abroad inasmuch as open revolution at home was not possible, and arranged to have this open fight abroad supported by a secret underground organization at home ('The Mafia'). Abroad, we were able to convince the Allies of our right to independence. We were able also to convince the Allies of the true nature of the Habsburgs and their absolutism …. People in the West were already convinced concerning Prussia and Russia. It was our task to convince them that the imperialism of Vienna was no better, and in some respects worse …. We had to break down austrophile sentiment in the Allied countries. But, more important still, we had to give to the Allies a positive program in regard to central Europe.[49]

At first Masaryk had little success in enlisting the sympathy of Russia. Personally he had not been well received there because of his democratic principles. Furthermore, Russia, while sympathetic to those Slavs who, like themselves, were of the Orthodox faith (namely the Serbs and Bulgarians) found religion a bar to common action with the Roman Catholic Poles, Czechs and Croatians. Consequently the idea of an independent Poland and an independent Czechoslovakia and the amalgamation of the Croatians and Slovenes with the Serbs in a Yugoslav state left the Russian leaders cold. Naturally the Germanophile element in the Imperial Russian government could not have been expected to favor Masaryk's plan for a new Europe.

The Russian revolution, however, put a different face on matters there. As soon thereafter as possible, Masaryk left for Russia with the main idea of organizing as large an armed force as could be enlisted among the Czechs and Slovaks who were being held there as prisoners of war. The Czechoslovak Legion in Russia was in a very real sense his creation; their accomplishments were his accomplishments, as we shall see. The activities of the Legion were at one and the same time the greatest source of worry to Masaryk and his most convincing argument for the justification of the cause of Czechoslovak independence. Before he left Russia for America, much of his time there was given to negotiations growing out of the Siberian episode of the Czechoslovak Legion.

But even more important work awaited him in the United States. Propaganda for a separate peace with Austria, by which the latter should be left intact, was gaining ground in America. President Wilson was becoming an increasingly influential factor in the formulation of the Allied war aims. It was essential that he be convinced of the necessity of the complete disruption of Austria-Hungary, and the

[49] T.G. Masaryk – *Světová revoluce*, p. 78

establishment of the independent states of Poland, Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia. Many Americans were woefully ignorant of central European conditions and the problems of the smaller nations, and there was a crying need to educate American public opinion on these points.

For the performance of such tasks, Masaryk was eminently well qualified. He had a perfect command of the English language. He understood the American people and knew how to enlist their sympathy and understanding. He had much in common with President Wilson. Both Masaryk and Wilson had attained high positions in the educational world; both had entered public life from idealistic motives and were bringing to it the fruits of a long scholarly study of political and international questions. It was not surprising. So Masaryk found that in America the doors of opportunity swung wide open for him to plead his case and win the confidence and support of both government and people.

Masaryk was welcomed most cordially by the American authorities, the more so because at that time the problem of Russia was becoming increasingly urgent, and it was felt that Masaryk, with his specialized knowledge of Russia and Russian conditions, would be able to throw some new light on the situation.

The problem of Russia and the question of the role of the Czechoslovak troops were discussed repeatedly by Masaryk in conferences with Secretary of State Lansing, Colonel House and President Wilson himself. Meanwhile, however, the sensational news of the victorious campaign of the Czechoslovak Legion against the Bolsheviks put a new face on both problems, and the question of Allied intervention in Russia and of American participation therein pressed for decision.

It is almost impossible to exaggerate the importance of the part played by these soldiers in the fight of the Czechoslovaks for national freedom. Their victories on the battle field, important as they came to be, were, after all, only means to a greater end, victories in the field of diplomacy. The Siberian campaign fascinated the whole world; it dramatized and popularized the Czechoslovak cause in the Allied countries and greatly simplified the task of convincing the Allied statesmen that independence for Czechoslovakia must be included among the war aims.

The record of the Czechoslovak Legionnaires in Siberia thus became one of the great arguments in the hands of Masaryk and Beneš as they negotiated with the Allied powers. That they made good use of their opportunity is shown by the fact that shortly after the news of this modern "Anabasis" reached the outside world, the right of Czechoslovakia to independence was recognized.

Thus on August 3rd, 1918, the United States government announced that together with other Allied governments, it would send military and material aid to the Czechoslovak Army in Siberia, and would also embark upon an undertaking

designed to help Russia economically. A month later, the United States followed the example of France and England in recognizing the Czechoslovak National Council as the *de facto* Czechoslovak government. This gave Masaryk an official standing he had not previously enjoyed, and enabled him to arrange for an extensive program of assistance for the army in Siberia by the American Red Cross.

In October 1918, Austria began to negotiate with the United States for a separate peace. After an interchange of notes, Vienna finally declared its willingness to accept Wilson's Fourteen Points as a basis of negotiation and to organize a federated state in which complete autonomy would be granted to the subject nationalities, including the Czechoslovaks. Masaryk, however, was not to be satisfied with anything less than complete and full independence which, coming from the recognized head of the *de facto* Czechoslovak government, carried great weight with President Wilson and the general public. President Wilson's reply to the Austrian proposal made it clear that as the United States had already recognized and approved the national aspirations of the Poles, Czechoslovaks and Yugoslavs it was not for him but for these recognized nations to decide whether any proposal by Austria would be satisfactory to them. This practically put an end to the danger of a separate peace which would leave Austria intact. All that remained now to make possible the complete realization of the hopes and aspirations of Masaryk and his colleagues was to ensure the final military and political victory in Europe.

But Masaryk still found time to organize and lead some significant meetings with representatives of the other small nations of central and eastern Europe, principally the Poles, Lithuanians, Ukrainians and Yugoslavs. Particularly noteworthy was the demonstration held at Independence Hall in Philadelphia on October 23rd, 1918, at which there was issued a "Declaration of the Common Aims of the Independent States of Central Europe." It was upon this occasion that the Liberty Bell was rung again in recognition of a new birth of freedom for nations long oppressed.

Finally, early in November, came the news of the bloodless revolution in Prague on October 28th, and the establishment of a temporary government to which Masaryk, by the unanimous choice of all parties, was called to become the first President of the Czechoslovak Republic. The news reached Masaryk in America, and he was immediately surrounded by admirers and friends bearing their congratulations. When asked by the representatives of the press "how it felt to be President," he said, "I cannot describe my feelings. I suppose I am happy, but I know that I have a great sense of my responsibility. I really haven't time to rejoice, for I know that I am confronted by tremendous problems, and I am conscious of my responsibilities not only for my own nation but to all nations of the world with which we shall have to cooperate. We simply cannot – we must not disappoint the

world."

Upon sailing from New York to take up his duties as President, Masaryk took occasion to express his gratitude for America's help and to assure the American people "that we shall do all in our power to make our state a stronghold of liberty in the heart of Europe and the vanguard of democracy in the east," and "to express the hope that the two democracies of America and Czechoslovakia would be able, in cooperation with the other democracies of the world, to lay strong foundations for a new order in a redeemed world."

Chapter 7

With the Czechoslovak Legion in Russia and Siberia

At the outbreak of the first Russian revolution in the Spring of 1917 hopes ran high in America that a real democracy might be established in Russia and the country restored to the ranks of those who were fighting vigorously against the Central Powers. A commission headed by Elihu Root was sent by our government to explore possible ways for bringing the help of the United States to the Kerensky regime which had true democratic aspirations. John R. Mott was a member of the commission. For Mr. Mott the best answer to any problem was the Young Men's Christian Association. So it was decided to flood the country with Y.M.C.A. Secretaries to bolster the morale of the Russian Army. I was one of the first to volunteer for this service.[50]

In one week I made all preparations for the trip: the heaviest of clothing and equipment against the dreaded cold of Siberia; innumerable "shots" against every threatened disease; interminable briefing by the Y.M.C.A. directors for every possible contingency. Among other instructions, we were told to include in our equipment a "morning suit," that protocol might be served when any diplomatic, official or royal (save the mark) amenities might demand our social presence. Often during the turbulent days which were to follow, as we observed the very *al fresco* garb of officials, high and low, and knew how very dead and beyond audiences were the members of the Russian royal family, we thought wryly of those morning suits stored with other unwanted baggage.

Twelve of us gathered at San Francisco in late August, 1917. We were a motley crew if there ever was one. Our leader was Harvey Anderson who had served in Russia as a Y.M.C.A. Secretary and had a fluent command of the language.

At once we commenced to study Russian. My knowledge of Czech was a great help to me, so similar are the various Slavic tongues. One of our group declared his intention not to bother learning the language. "I have always found in my wide experience that a winning smile goes a long way with any people no matter what the language," he said. Later I learned that the first Russian language that this individual did learn was, "What is the quickest way to get back to America?" The others in the group were reliable men with experience either in the "Y" or the church or in social work, with one or two business men to leaven the lump. They

[50] More on the Root Mission, the Kerensky regime and J. Mott available in the biographical essay.

made interesting company on the long journey across the Pacific and on the Trans-Siberian Railway, and they strove earnestly to prepare for service under difficult, sometimes almost impossible, conditions.

The long voyage was not without its revealing and amusing incidents. We were on a Dutch ship bound for the East Indies; the crew was East Indian. The captain took huge delight in urging us to take large helpings of their sharply spiced dishes, shouting with laughter at the way our unaccustomed palates were tortured.

During a two-day stop at Hawaii we heard, with rising hackles, our companion of the "winning smile" being introduced as "Mr. ____ who is taking a group of young men to Russia." In Japan waiting for a ship to take us to Vladivostok we found ourselves being followed by a Japanese secret service man. When he finally confronted us we found that his sketchy knowledge of English made it difficult for him to discover what a dozen men were doing in his country. Told that we were Y.M.C.A. Secretaries, he consulted his dictionary and came up with an answer to his questioning. "Aha! you write," said he.

Throughout the long journey on the *SS Rembrandt* and during our stay in Japan the radio reports became increasingly ominous. Uprisings were reported all over Russia; Kornilov[51] was advancing on Moscow with a powerful armed force; Lenin and Trotsky had arrived in Russia and were mobilizing the workers for revolt. Restoring the morale of the Russian army seemed a foolish and visionary mission in the face of such rude realities.

Nor were we encouraged when on arrival at the beautiful harbor of Vladivostok we began to look for a place to lay our heads. During the fifteen days at sea we all had grown beards and must have looked like a band of anarchists to the local people. Certainly we were a seedy looking group of foreigners and we found that there was no room at the inn or anywhere else in the city. We spent the first night in the American consulate, ten of us sleeping on the floor and two on the pool table. The next day we went to the "bazaar," an outdoor market, and each of us returned with a mattress upon his back. A sufficiently large room had been found for us, but without a stick of furniture in it, so the twelve mattresses were laid out side by side on the floor. The sanitary conditions were unbelievable. In the so-called best restaurants we discovered that a quick gulp was the only way to cheat the flies who coveted our food. For ten days we endured this without any assurances as to when, if ever, the next Trans-Siberian Express would be leaving.

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[51] Lavr G. Kornilov (1870-1918) – officer in the Russian Imperial Army, in July 1917 named commander-in-chief of the Provisional Government's armed forces, one of the anti-Bolshevik leaders.

Finally the day came with insufficient notice, but somehow we packed and rushed to the railroad station. The seven-day journey across Siberia and Russia to Petrograd[52] was tedious but quite comfortable. We were in a sleeping car and there was even a dining car attached to the train. This was the last of such luxuries for the next two years. Each mile we traveled brought us closer to the cauldron of revolution. More than once a crowd gathered outside our car while the train was making a station stop and many shook their fists at us shouting "down with the bourgeoisie." We knew enough Russian to understand that.

Arriving at last at Petrograd in October 1917 we found the Y.M.C.A. men who had been on the ground previously quite at loss as to what to do with this group of twelve men, let alone the eighty others they knew were to follow; all of them charged with the task of saving the morale of the Russian army! Life in Petrograd was completely demoralized. The Kerensky revolution of the previous spring had failed to gather momentum or the support of the people and it seemed certain to fall before the Bolsheviks.

By a marvel I had Czech friends in Petrograd, who reported that Professor Masaryk was in the city. In order to meet this old friend from my days in Prague, the greatest secrecy was enjoined; no one seemed sure of his status under these chaotic conditions within the Russian government. We did meet twice quite clandestinely and those interviews in a Russian coffee house were memorable ones. Although I had been assigned for work with the Russian troops the presence of the Czech and Slovak forces now made my serving with them more logical. Prof. Masaryk requested my transfer and this the Y.M.C.A. immediately granted.

Masaryk had heard of the war service which the "Y" was rendering on the western front, and he was most anxious that his "boys" should have this type of service. He pointed out that the Czechoslovak Army was in a peculiarly difficult position with regard to the maintenance of morale, deprived as they were of the moral support of the home base, so important to any army. Here in fact was an army without a country, for the Czechoslovaks were fighting for the creation, the re-creation, of their nation which for three hundred years had been under alien rule. And although they were morally certain of the support of their countrymen at home, they were never in all those years to experience the thrilling sensation which comes to soldiers when their countrymen make a visible demonstration of loyal interest and support. Their people at home would have been shot as traitors had they shown open sympathy with the Czechoslovak Legion. Most of these men had been in Russia for

[52] St. Petersburg 1703-1914 and 1991 to present. During 1914-1924 Petrograd, between 1924 and 1991 Leningrad.

several years, completely cut off from any contact with family or friends. Recalling what it meant to the American armies in France when mail was delayed for a matter of weeks, I could understand how frightful was the isolation and loneliness of these Czechoslovak troops, without a word for several years! Besides this, it is to be remembered that the surroundings in which the Czechoslovak army was placed were demoralizing in the extreme. A great test of moral courage was offered to these men to build up an army while all around them civilization itself seemed to be breaking down.

Professor Masaryk pointed out that, under such circumstances, the program of the "Y" to establish centers where the men could congregate in their leisure time for recreation and diversion would make a great appeal to them. "You men from America can help to make these boys know that they are not forgotten or neglected, that their self-sacrifice is appreciated. They will appreciate it the more because you come as representatives of America, which, since her entrance into the war, is regarded by all as the Saviour of the Allied cause, and looked up to with an affectionate attitude which sometimes approached hero worship. They will give you a cordial reception because you are Americans. Later, when you have demonstrated what the Y.M.C.A. is, they may give you such a reception because you are Y.M.C.A. men. But, I advise you to go slowly and cautiously with your religious program." He went on to tell of the revulsion of feeling in the army against the Church, and of the disrepute into which organized religion had fallen in the army. Many of the men during the Czar's regime had been baptized into the Russian Orthodox Church for purely political reasons, and this did not increase their respect for the Church. Such respect was further lowered by the shameful spectacle of a priest, attached to the army, who had fled from the field of battle at Zborov. Masaryk gave an imitation of the priest picking up the skirt of his cassock and running for his life when the bullets began to fly. "Don't start out by preaching to them," he said in conclusion, "put on your service program, prove your disinterestedness. Win their friendship and confidence, and then you can do whatever you wish."

The next day my transfer to the Czechoslovak Legion was arranged and with a letter from Masaryk and an official credential from the Y.M.C.A. (which stated that I was to serve with the "checked" [*sic*] troops) I made ready to depart for Kiev.

It was the day before the Bolshevik revolution. In Petrograd rumors were flying thick and fast and the atmosphere was charged with tension and uncertainty. In coffee houses and restaurants, anxious faces were drawn together in whispered conference. The *Tovarischi* (comrades), marching with red flags emblazoned with the Soviet war cries, were becoming more confident, more assured, more impudently bold with every passing hour.

At the railroad station a great crowd gathered hours before the Kiev train was due to depart. We stood and waited, my Czechoslovak companion and I, wedged in between a group of Russian soldiers returning from the front; a liberally tipped *nosilschik* (porter) hovered near, ready to take my baggage and find a place for me on the train.

As we waited, we listened to what the soldiers were saying. It was all about the war and the conditions at the front. One of them was giving a vivid description of a battle, of the machine-gun fire, the heavy artillery and shrapnel and concluded with the words "Never again! I am going home to my own village and stay there." "Yes, we have certainly had enough of war," another said. "And the German soldiers were peasants and workingmen just as we are. Why should we fight them?"

Conversation was suddenly interrupted by the guards opening up the gates and a wild scramble followed, soldiers and civilians alike rushing forward, pushing, shoving and yelling, descending upon that train like a pack of hungry wolves. In the excitement we lost our *nosilschik*, and it was some time before we saw him beckoning to us from a car window. Somehow he had found me a place in the corner of a coupe by the window and had my suitcase and duffle bag safely on the rack above. Others crowded into the compartment until there were ten of us squeezed into space meant for six. But I had my place and sat tight, determined to keep it. Incongruously my companion bade me "good bye and a pleasant journey," and the train pulled out. "Journey into what?" I asked myself and perhaps fortunately had no answer.

It was already dark outside, and there was no light in the coupe, save from a flickering candle, so I was left to my own reflections. I understood little Russian at the time, and the noisy rapid conversation carried on by my fellow travelers was quite lost on me. It was a way-train and at every station more passengers, mostly soldiers, crowded in until the aisles were choked with them. Little did that disturb them, for they lay themselves down on the bare wooden floor and fell asleep, forming a tangled mass of arms, legs, heads and knapsacks which had to be unscrambled again with much cursing at every station.

There was no sleep that night. In the morning my breakfast was made of the sausage and cheese which my Petrograd friend had thoughtfully provided, washed down with some tea which a more travel-wise neighbor gave me. She had induced one of the soldiers to fill her teapot with boiling water (*kipyatok*) at the station.[53] Not until twelve o'clock the next day could I move from my place and then I found

[53] As it is not safe to drink unboiled water in Russia, a huge kettle of *kipyatok* [boiled water] is a part of every depot's equipment. (*note by KDM*)

I must change trains. In the next carriage I was lucky to secure a good place, clean and not over-crowded. My only companion proved to be a badly wounded soldier who was being taken home by his companions in arms. The poor fellow groaned in pain with every lurch of the train, so that the journey was not precisely restful.

About midnight we arrived at a station called Bakhmach, another point of change. Again the station was jammed with soldiers, the benches filled, and many hundreds lying on the floor using their knapsacks as pillows. Newspapers were being read with obvious excitement; peering over their shoulders I could make out the headlines, "Revolution in Petrograd! Soviet seizes power. Kerensky in flight."[54] Yet at that particular moment I did not care if there were a dozen revolutions, if I could only get to Kiev and get something to eat besides sausage and cheese, and a place to lie down without being trampled on.

Remembering the Petrograd experience, I again hired a *nosilschik* and trusted him to get me and my luggage on a train. After hours of waiting a train came in bound for Kiev and there was a grand rush to the platform, but this train was already filled to overflowing and soldiers were hanging on to the steps and even riding on the roofs of the cars. My *nosilschik*, however, noticed one passenger leaving the train by way of a car window. He shouted, "Here is your chance," and began boosting me up through the car window. However, the passengers inside decided they did not want another occupant and began pushing me out. The tug-of-war was won by the team inside and as I dropped to the platform, the train pulled out.

At that moment, I was more discouraged than Kerensky! After wandering hopelessly around the waiting room for a while, I suddenly saw a soldier clad in the Russian uniform, but with a little red and white ribbon of the Czechoslovak Legion on the front of his cap. Needless to say, I fell upon the man; here was someone who would understand me. He was friendly and immediately took me on as his personal responsibility. When the next train for Kiev came in, he seized my suitcase and bag in addition to his own knapsack and gun and had us both aboard in a jiffy. We had no seats, to be sure, but we were on the train and actually moving towards Kiev!

The last lap of this journey was short and anything but dull. The third-class carriage was filled with soldiers, all three tiers of wooden bunks more than occupied. Some of the men slept but most of them were smoking cigarettes made of a rank and stinking tobacco which I later came to know as "makhorka." Others chewed sunflower seeds, constantly spitting out the husks so that their beards, their clothing and the floor were littered with them. In addition, their army coats or "shinels"

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[54] Alexander F. Kerensky (1881-1970) – Prime Minister of Russia, July 21 – November 8, 1917

were made of a coarse cloth which gives off a fierce odor of its own. Every so often a "tovarishch" on the top tier, taking careful aim, would expectorate through a tangled mass of heads, arms, and legs upon the floor below. They were good shots, these Russian soldiers; I never saw them miss once.

At first they were all very busy discussing the astounding news from Petrograd, but presently they turned their attention to me, obviously a foreigner. Through the Czechoslovak soldier, I tried to explain myself and my mission, but I saw at once that I was definitely a suspect and they had me spotted as some sort of propagandist. One of them said, "I know you are going to try to get us Russians to keep on fighting. You had better go home. We have had enough of war." Perhaps this Russian spoke truer words than he knew, considering the expressed purpose of the Y.M.C.A. expedition to Russia "to strengthen the morale of the Russian Army." But I didn't go home – not yet. And later I was thankful to be dealing with the morale of the Czechoslovak army instead of the Russians.

Kiev seemed like heaven, after the nightmare of the journey. The Y.M.C.A. Secretary was living in a comfortable house, with his wife. A room was found for me in an equally comfortable hotel; I enjoyed in comfort an excellent meal; I went to bed and slept – still in comfort.

I woke to find the city of Kiev in a state of nerves. Excitement, anxiety, uncertainty prevailed, especially uncertainty, for no one knew what was going to happen though everyone felt sure that great disturbances lay ahead and the wildest rumors were flying about. The Ukrainians, the "Reds," and the Cadets, supporters of Kerensky, were the main elements in the situation. Everyone knew that there would be a clash between the Reds and the Cadets but no one knew which side the Ukrainians would take, and apparently they did not know themselves.

I walked down the Kreschatik, the main street of the city, where a vast crowd had assembled. The people had apparently abandoned their ordinary pursuits; indeed, it would have been impossible to work in that electrically-charged atmosphere. Up and down the sidewalks, the people moved, sauntering along somewhat after the fashion of the promenade in Prague. All were talking, some excitedly, some fearfully, of the crisis in which they found themselves. Now and then a group would gather in a huddle at the center of which two or three men would be in fierce argument. Then one of them would begin to harangue the crowd. A Bolshevik had much to say about "mir bez annexi a kontributsii" (peace without annexations or contributions) or "mir, zemlya a volya" (peace, the land, and Liberty). He seemed to hit the nail with his hearers for they all nodded their heads and said, "pravilno, pravilno" (true, quite true). However, in another moment, a Kerensky supporter took the stand in a tempest of passion, urging Russia's continuance in the war,

fighting it through to the finish, and the very same people would again nod their heads and say, "pravilno, pravilno."

The progress of this political caucus was rudely interrupted by the appearance of an armored car, and the deadly spatter of machine-gun fire filled the street. No one knew whence it came or the reason for the shooting; no one stopped to inquire. In the twinkling of an eye, that street was deserted as Wall Street on a Sunday. The citizens of Kiev, Bolshevik and anti-Bolshevik alike, disappeared into the houses, or behind trees, or cast themselves flat on the pavement, retreating in the confusion of panic from this rain of death.

The armored car passed on to terrify citizens in other parts of the city. One by one the people cautiously peered out from their hiding places, and seeing the way clear, came out into the open. An apple woman whose pushcart had been upset, began to grumble as she picked up the apples from the street, people brushed the dirt from their clothes and with a shrug of their shoulders, and with muttered "nichevo" (no matter), resumed their promenade up and down the street.

All that night the rattle of machine-gun fire continued and occasionally we heard the boom of a cannon. As armed bandits called "hooligans" were taking advantage of the situation to rob and pillage, the guests in the hotel formed a vigilance committee and we took turns keeping watch in the hotel lobby with revolvers close at hand.

The next day a general strike was called. The total personnel of the hotel (cooks, waiters and chambermaids) all walked out. No meals were served. Stores and restaurants were closed, their steel shutters firmly drawn. No street cars ran, there were no electric lights. Few people appeared on the streets. It was like a city of the dead.

Meanwhile the battle for control of the city had gone in favor of the Cadets, to whom the Ukrainians threw their support at the last moment. A provisional Ukrainian government was set up, somewhat tending to reconcile the opposing forces and maintain the city's independence.

During this time, perhaps a week, I had periodically gone to the headquarters of the Czechoslovak National Council to present my credentials from Professor Masaryk. The officials were far too concerned with the critical affairs of the moment to pay attention to a Y.M.C.A. Secretary, and I was asked to wait until things had settled down a bit. In spite of the declared intention of the Czechoslovak authorities to maintain a position of neutrality in Russian internal affairs, in the confusion one of the Czechoslovak regiments quite without authority had taken part in the street fighting on the side of the Cadets, with slight casualties resulting.

When the fighting ceased and something resembling order was established, this

regiment returned to its position at the front and arrangements were made for me to go with it that I might study the situation and plan a possible program. So within that week I started for "the front."

The quotation marks about these words "the front" are quite intentional. A division of the Czechoslovak army was at this time stationed near enough to the Russian front line trenches to be called upon for active duty at any time. But those front line trenches were already almost empty of Russian soldiers and it was obvious that the only "advance" that the great mass of Russian soldiers would make would be an "advance" towards home.

The railroad lines leading from Kiev were choked with long freight trains, filled to overflowing with Russian soldiers. They were traveling in every direction except toward the front. Discipline had been long since thrown to the four winds; indeed many officers had stripped their uniforms of shoulder straps, fearing for their personal safety if caught by an enraged Bolshevik. Russia had called 18,000,000 men to the colors; they no longer formed an army but a mob of undisciplined, uncontrolled vagabonds. They were delirious with a new-found personal power; now vengeance could be wreaked upon the hated "bourgeoisie" and the officers who had forever and traditionally treated them like dogs. A new kind of brute force was now in command, the purpose only to return home to seize the land of the nearest nobleman, to live at ease, that strange comfort they had never known before.

As they traveled around the country going in any direction except toward the front, these peasants left behind them a wake of disorder, destruction, robbery, pillage and filth. It was black chaos.

I made several trips back to Kiev from Polonnoe where I was billeted with an officer of the Third Regiment. One of the Czechoslovak soldiers accompanied me. When the train pulled into the railroad station I could not see how anyone could possibly board it. But Vacek called "Come on! Follow me!" He jumped up on the couplings for he had seen there was a hogshead jammed in between the two cars – a trophy some Red soldier was carrying home from the front. So we sat, the two of us astride the barrel, which wobbled fearfully from side to side as the train got under way. Once on the train we stayed there, crawling to the platform when someone left it to make room enough for two more. There we stood the rest of the way into Kiev, wedged in like sardines, just enough space to place our feet. On our return trip from Kiev we had to board the train hours before its scheduled leaving in order to find any space at all. Again, it was standing room only on the outside platform of the car, although at one point on the journey I found a place to sit down – in the wash bowl in the adjoining toilet!

After several such experiences of travel in revolutionary Russia I could readily

believe some of the tales the Czechoslovak soldiers told me. During the summer the Russian soldiers had made it a practice to ride on the roofs of the coaches. Once when the wood-burning locomotive sent a shower of sparks back over the roofs, the passengers there made a wild rush for the rear, many of them being pushed off the while. The panic was only stopped when the Russian soldiers began sending warning shots at the engineer so that he finally stopped the train.

In the midst of this horror of disorder and anarchy, the camps of the Czechoslovak troops were like oases of order, cleanliness and discipline. The very look of the Czechoslovak soldiers was different. I was to understand the contrast as I became acquainted with this unique army, recruited from Czechoslovak residents of Russia and augmented by Czechs and Slovaks who, after being taken prisoners by Russia, volunteered to turn around and fight the Austrian army into which they had been drafted. Here were educated men who had offered themselves for service because of devotion to their nation's cause; men who had no love for the trappings of militarism, but who believed in discipline and had voluntarily subjected themselves to it. These men risked their entire future upon the success of a great cause. If the Allies were defeated and Austria remained intact, they knew they could never return home, for every one of them was listed as a traitor to the Austrian government. They could only return to a liberated Czechoslovakia. In their soul's determination, they knew they were going home and they were ready to fight to the finish for that faith in a freed nation. Their faces were set toward the front, and while the Russians were crying "We have had enough of war," they were saying "We have just begun to fight."

The four regiments of the first Czechoslovak division were quartered in small Ukrainian villages in the neighborhood of Polonnoe. This section of the country had been a part of the old "Pale of Settlement"; the towns were almost entirely Jewish, but the villages were Ukrainian. Both Jews and Ukrainians were delighted to have the Czechoslovaks there, for their presence was a guarantee of order and safety. Moreover they had learned that the Czechoslovaks did not requisition without payment and that the soldiers individually were respectful, courteous and kind in their treatment of civilians.

But the conditions under which the soldiers were living were depressing in the extreme. Billeted in the cottages of the Ukrainian peasants, they lacked even the minimum necessities of their own unsophisticated experience. Come nightfall and there were no lights indoors or out; the streets, knee-deep in mud, did not invite visiting and there was no place in which they might gather.

Soon I had a few portable shacks brought out from Kiev. The men fell to it with a will and in no time a presentable and homelike soldier's club stood ready for them.

They had fashioned a large-sized "kipyatok" for their tea; the baker produced some Czechoslovak rolls and cakes. I had brought out from Kiev some chess and checker boards, even some records of Czechoslovak songs and music and a phonograph to play them on, as well as some illustrated magazines I found in the city.

The atmosphere of the little club was warm and homelike. The men liked to gather there to drink their tea, play chess and listen to Czech music, but most of all they came for the talk they could have with each other, the sharing of their amazing experiences, the telling of their story.

And what a story it was!

Chapter 8

The origin of the Czechoslovak Legion

As I sat in the crowded soldiers' club at Polonnoe, I soon found myself surrounded by a group of Legionnaires, both officers and men, eager to tell a newcomer, and especially an American, of their experiences. Such conversation became the greatest boon to me as we traveled the enormous distances of Russia and Siberia. Not only were these men already seasoned by experience, but they were thoughtful, trenchant commentators, analysts of the current events in Russia and Europe.

In the group there were certain individuals calling themselves, with obvious pride, "starodružiníci" (veteran Legionnaires). They unfolded for me the genesis of the Czech Legion as it was tied in with the special service they had been able to give to the Russian army in the early years of the war. From them and from many others later on, I began to piece together the history of the Legion.

When the war began in the summer of 1914 there were already many Czechs residing in Russia. They were engaged in commercial and professional pursuits, and as Austrian subjects, were in danger of internment.

The most urgent necessity upon these Russian Czechs was to prove that as good Slavs their sympathies were with Russia rather than with Austria. Nothing, they decided, would so strongly attest to their sincerity as the formation of a fighting corps of volunteers from among them for service in the Russian army. Permission having been granted by the Russian government, the "Česká Družina" or Czech Volunteer Legion was forthwith organized in Kiev. At the time of the dedication of their colors on September 24, 1914, they mustered 1,000 men.

The Czech Legion[55] itself was enrolled as part of the regular Russian army, but the various companies within the Legion were assigned to the Russian staff for special intelligence services. Here they were to prove uniquely valuable; for as former Austrian soldiers they knew the Austrian military system inside out. They knew the languages employed in the Austrian army; they knew from bitter experience the psychology of the Austrian command. Consequently, they were able to gather strategic information concerning the plans and movements of the enemy as the Russians themselves could not possibly have done. Dressed in Austrian uniforms, many of them made their way behind the Austrian lines, remained there openly and boldly for several days, returning to give the accurate results of their observations to the Russian Staff. Some even traveled as far as Bohemia, to study the conditions

[55] The name Czechoslovak Legion was not used until after 1917. (*note by KDM*)

prevailing there, to gauge the sentiment of the people, to communicate with the partisan leaders at home and report all this to the Russian authorities. In countless ways, these Czech volunteers proved to their Russian leaders their heroism, their devotion to the Russian cause, and their undying enmity for Austria. Gradually, they succeeded in overcoming the suspicion with which they were at first regarded, and both individuals and companies of the Legion were frequently cited for bravery in the Russian dispatches. The Czech Legion made an enviable reputation for itself in the Russian army, while the Austrian authorities paid them the greatest compliment by a setting high price upon the head of any Czech Legionnaire taken dead or alive.

The events of the summer of 1917 just passed were especially vivid in the minds of the Legionnaires in the First, Second and Third Regiments. Few students of World War I will appreciate the significance of the battle of Zborov,[56] perhaps viewing it only as a very minor engagement on the eastern front, but every Czech and Slovak, and most of all those who participated, recalled that engagement with the deepest pride.

By the summer of 1917 the Russian army had begun to disintegrate at an alarmingly rapid rate. One by-product of the new freedom granted by the revolution was the relaxation of military discipline; instead of continuing the rigid authority of the officers, disciplinary measures and military decisions were left to be worked out by company and regimental committees "by the democratic process." This opened the flood gates of that anti-war agitation by the Bolsheviks which would lead to the total disruption of the army.

The Russian leaders, especially Kerensky, Kornilov and Brusilov,[57] made desperate efforts to stem this tidal wave. They believed that a planned offensive would prove to the world, and to the men themselves, that the Russian army of the Revolution could still fight and could still win the war.

Accordingly, Kerensky called for volunteers, and among the first detachment to offer its services was the Czechoslovak Legion, now numbering 3,000 men. The Legion was assigned the central position in the attack and, for the first time, the Czechoslovaks entered the trenches as a military unit. The attack centered at Zborov, a little village in eastern Galicia, and the ultimate objective was the capture

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[56] On July 2, 1917, in western Ukraine, ca. 50 miles east of Lviv.

[57] Aleksei Brusilov (1853-1926) – officer in the Russian Imperial Army, commander-in-chief of the Provisional Government's armed forces in March through July 1917. He joined the Red Army in 1920.

of Lviv. The boys were wildly enthusiastic over the prospect of showing the whole world what they could do. They realized that this was the first time in three hundred years that a Czechoslovak military unit had entered the field of battle to fight for their national cause against their hereditary enemies, the Germans. Such was their enthusiasm that their officers had difficulty in restraining them from attacking before the scheduled time and, when the moment came, their part of the advance was an amazing success. Six lines of trenches were captured in a rush, over 4,000 prisoners taken, and the enemy line broken at its center. Witnesses of the engagement testified that they had never seen such bold and intrepid fighters as the Legionnaires. The Germans called them the "Red and White Devils," because of the red and white ribbons in their caps. The Legionnaires were elated and wished to push on, but were obliged to wait for the Russians on either flank to come up with them.

Actually the Russian forces never did join the Czechoslovaks, for they were already too demoralized to be effective in battle, and the general plan failed on that account. The temporary success gained by the Czechoslovaks went for nothing and soon the whole Russian army was in full rout before the German and Austrian counter-offensive. It was a bitter disappointment to the Czechs who imagined themselves the conquerors of Lviv, but in the end, all they could do was to organize the inevitable retreat and this they did with notable bravery and with heavy casualties.

This proved to be the last gasp of the dying Russian army; never again would they make any determined stand against the enemy. For the Czechoslovak people, however, the engagement at Zborov on July 2, 1917, would always remain a red-letter day. There the Czech soldiers found themselves; there they tested their strength on the field of battle and were victorious. From that day on a spirit of utmost confidence and of faith in themselves was engendered; given anything like an even chance, they knew they could beat the Germans. Men who had been indifferent "slackers" in the Austrian army had been transformed into furious fighters for the Czechoslovak cause. Such bravery won recognition from the outside world and gained the praise and admiration of the Russian authorities. Kerensky visited the brigade in person, congratulating the troops, and removed all restrictions on recruitment from the prison camps. The story of the heroic fighting at Zborov traveled to the far corners of Russia, stimulating the courage of the revolutionary leaders and kindling new enthusiasm in the Czech and Slovak prisoners. By this single success new life came to the revolutionary movement and to the Czechoslovaks themselves a new hope for the future, a new faith in the ultimate triumph of their great cause.

Volunteers came streaming into Kiev to enlist, new companies and regiments were

formed and soon two complete divisions were under arms and in training for service. As the complete breakdown of the Russian army rendered any further fighting on the eastern front out of the question, the Czechoslovak troops were withdrawn some distance behind the lines and held in reserve until the situation could be clarified. The interlude was used to train new recruits and complete the organization of the force, now a full army corps of 40,000 men.

This work was carried on with the utmost difficulty. The Russian army had obviously collapsed and the revolution which had promised so much was drifting into anarchy as Bolshevism gained increasing power and influence. There seemed scant chance for service to the Allied cause or to the Czechoslovak national cause while the "Reds" ruled in Russia. Minds of all were filled with gloomy forebodings.

Yet as I lived and worked with the Legion that winter of 1917-18, three things served to lift the hopes and renew flagging spirits. One was the memory of Zborov and what had been done there. The second was the entrance of America into the war,[58] for after that no one seemed to doubt the ultimate success of the Allies. We who had come to the Czechoslovak army in any sense representing America were given an amazing reception. Just to be an American in Russia with the Czechoslovak troops was assurance of complete acceptance.

The third and greatest source of encouragement to these men was the fact that Professor Masaryk himself was now in Russia. The Czechoslovak revolutionary cause in Russia had suffered in its inception from the lack of proper leadership. Under the Czarist regime, Professor Masaryk had been *persona non grata* to the Russian government because of his frank criticism of the imperial government in his writings, but as soon as the revolution opened the way, Professor Masaryk proceeded immediately to Russia to take personal charge of Czech affairs. This involved most important diplomatic negotiations in regard to the organization and deployment of the Legion. His coming was hailed with tremendous enthusiasm, and his presence in Russia was regarded as the best guarantee for the future. Affectionately known in the army as *Tatínek* (Daddy), the men placed unquestioning confidence in his leadership. This was his army; the soldiers were "his boys." It was his personal presence in Russia, his spiritual influence upon the morale of the troops and his wisdom in planning for their disposition that enabled an expatriated army to endure through the testing winter of 1917-1918. He was already recognized as the genius of the liberation movement. He was the one leader in whose sincerity, unselfishness and ability Czechoslovaks of all parties had complete confidence.

Masaryk made this contribution to his fellow Czechoslovaks under the perilous

[58] April 6, 1917.

conditions attending such a chaotic rebellion. Coming to Moscow from Petrograd he set up his quarters in a hotel which proved to be in the direct line of fire between Czarist Cadets and Bolshevik troops. From this no-man's land he moved on to Kiev where his hotel was bombarded; a shell landed in the room next to his but fortunately proved to be a dud. All this he could and did take with the amazing inner and surface calm so characteristic of the man.

Chapter 9

Prisoners of war in Russia

While many of the most colorful and influential personalities were veterans of the Czech Legion, by far the great majority of Legionnaires were recruited from among the prisoners of war taken by the Russians. They too were anxious to pour out their stories to me; they wanted to tell the circumstances of their capture and their adventures and exploits in Russia.

During the early years of the war many thousand Czechs and Slovaks were taken prisoner. Members of the Czech Legion were constantly crossing over to the Austrian lines, carrying on systematic propaganda for wholesale desertion to the Russian army. This had been the case with the crack 28th Regiment of Prague which deserted *en masse* with its band playing and colors flying. Individuals and small groups stole across "No Man's Land" to the Russian trenches in the dead of night, or purposely lagged behind during an Austrian retreat so as to allow themselves to be overtaken by the advancing Russians. Thousands were captured during the Brusilov offensive and at other Russian successes such as the capture of the fortress of Przemysl. In all cases the Czechs and Slovaks became willing captives and welcomed their release from a forced service in the Austrian army. Many of these knew nothing of the existence of the Legion, some of them being frankly skeptical of such a fantastic venture; others had little stomach for more fighting, while the high-spirited Czech and Slovak patriots among them were anxious only to join up.

Unfortunately, the Russian authorities did not encourage the enlistment of these prisoners of war in the Czechoslovak Legion. In their eyes an Austrian prisoner was a prisoner still, an enemy captive, no matter what his nationality, no matter what his sympathies. Consequently, a vast majority of those Czechs and Slovaks who came over to Russia expecting to be welcomed with open arms by their brother Slavs were immediately dispatched to prison camps and subjected to the same treatment as the German and Magyar prisoners. It was only after the Kerensky revolution that the recruits for the Legion could be vigorously and successfully enlisted.

One of the men remembered as if it were yesterday his first day behind the Russian lines.

It was Good Friday, 1915. There were ten of us sitting around a great rusty kettle half-filled with cabbage soup, dipping our spoons into the common pot. We were all in a transport of joy, for we were with the Russians, our big brother-Slavs, whom we had always idealized and who we had hoped might save Bohemia from the Habsburg rule. A thousand

different thoughts were crowding in upon us. We were safe now, far away from the dim of exploding shells. No longer would we hear the hated German commands.

The world seemed a very good place to us that day; the sights about us were pleasing. The little village with its wooden cottages, the church with its curious tower, the horses, the wagons, and the good broad faces of the Russian soldiers all pleased us.

Another told how the Russian peasants were at first very curious about them. To their provincial minds, the new and the unknown must be conceived as radically different from themselves. He said that when the first prisoners of war began filtering into the interior of Russia, they would be surrounded by a crowd of gaping peasants walking round and round them examining most particularly their foreheads, backs and feet. They had been told by the priests that the Austrians were foreign devils and they seemed quite disappointed to find no evidence either of horns, a tail or cloven feet.

"Why!" they said, "These are men just like ourselves. Why then should we fight them?"

Then they would ply the prisoners with questions about their homeland, "Does the sun shine there by day and the moon by night?" "Do you have horses there and trains?"

Finally, one of the Czechoslovaks thought to have a little fun with them and, when he was asked, "Do you have cows in your country?"

He answered, "Yes."

"Do your cows have four legs as ours?"

"No, our cows have eight legs!"

"How can that be?" queried the peasant.

"Easy enough," said the Czechoslovak, "Count! They have two front legs, two hind legs, two right legs and two left legs. That makes eight!"

"So it does," said the peasant, counting on his fingers. "Wonderful."

And ever afterwards that Russian must have thought of Bohemia as the land of the eight-legged cows!

The Czechoslovaks may have laughed at the naïve simplicity of the Russian peasants, but they liked them and at the beginning had no misgivings as to how they would be treated by their Slavic brothers.

But many were to be bitterly disillusioned and to experience further hardships and privation. Some were sent to Siberian camps where the deadly cold took its daily toll. Others were sent to camps in the Caucasus where typhus and cholera raged and men died like flies. Still others were employed to build the Murmansk railroad under such primitive, cruel conditions that the road-bed was said to be built on the

bones of Czech and Slovak prisoners of war. Men of culture and education were placed at hard labor and forced to mine coal, dig trenches and build barracks. Others had a different experience altogether when they were hired out to Russian landlords as farm laborers or allowed to work at their own trade for Russian firms. The lot of this latter group was the happiest of all, for the Czechoslovaks are skilled workmen and often made themselves invaluable to their Russian employers. Furthermore, their Slavophile tendencies and the speed with which they gained command of the Russian language enabled them to establish friendly relations with the individual Russians with whom they came in contact.

Later when these men came into the Legion there was natural exchange of tall stories concerning their experiences as prisoners of war. One story topped the list in a mounting spiral of basic fact plus vivid imaginings, leading to a never-never land of fantasy. Always sooner or later one of the men would say, "Did you ever hear about the fiery death?" Then he would be off with a tale, which ran somewhat as follows:

When, early in the war, cholera broke out among the prisoners in Russia, the governor of each province was ordered to set up quarantine stations at strategic points to which those exposed to the disease might be sent. These centers were to be located at points convenient to the railroad but remote from inhabited places. The Governor of Turkestan caused a station with accommodations for forty men to be erected in the middle of the desert some forty versts from the nearest railroad stop. Upon its completion, the commandant was ordered to see to it that this fine new station was used.

Russian minor officials are noted for their blind obedience to orders and this particular commandant was apparently anxious only to demonstrate to the Governor that he knew how to obey promptly and explicitly. Accordingly, when the next train of prisoners arrived, he ordered them all out, lined them up, and arbitrarily counted off the first forty men to be sent to the quarantine camp. These men protested; they had no symptoms of disease and had not even been exposed. In vain. As far as this commandant was concerned, orders were orders and that was the end of that matter. So the forty unfortunates were packed off across the desert under guard.

Among that forty was an odd assortment of men, a few Poles, some Magyars and Germans, perhaps a dozen Czechoslovaks, one Turk and one Jew. It developed that the quarantine station consisted of two frame buildings, one for the prisoners and one for their guards. Inside their barracks, the prisoners found rough board bunks so arranged that the men lay side by side with their feet toward the center of the room. The heat was terrific and there was, of course, no shade except that cast by the building itself. This scanty shade was immediately and as if by divine right preempted by the German prisoners.

Provisions were brought in once a week, dried fish, sauerkraut, and black bread. Periodically a sanitary officer arrived to make cursory physical examinations. No one was ill

and he knew it, yet when they begged to be released, he turned a deaf ear. Days passed in that living furnace; the sun scorched those wooden buildings until resin oozed from the blistered boards. The Germans continued to usurp the pitiful strip of shade, moving around the barrack house with the shade; no one challenged them, arguments only raised more heat. The rest kept to their bunks, lying naked, the sweat dripping. Flies covered their nakedness, and remained, for it was too great an exertion to slap them off.

The food was rotten and they could not stomach it, but all were consumed by desperate thirst. There was a little pond of foul and evil smelling water about a half hour's walk from the camp. The prisoners took terms in going for it, pushing a small two-wheeled water cart. In the beginning, most of the men took the precaution to boil the water, using it only for tea, but occasionally one of them could not restrain himself and downed a cupful.

Came a morning when one of the prisoners failed to rise from his bunk. They went to waken him and drew back horrified for the man's face was dripping with perspiration, his lips already black and his breathing tortured. Cholera had struck. That day the sanitary officer happened to arrive for one of his periodic inspections. He took one look at the sick man, turned on his heel, ran out of the door, jumped into his wagon and disappeared in a cloud of dust. That was the last the prisoners ever saw of the so called guardian of their health.

The sick man lay two days dying. Under orders from the Russian guard, two of the prisoners dragged his body out on the sand and buried it. Then came another case, and another, until finally death became a daily visitor and each man remaining knew that he, too, was doomed to this ghastly death on the burning sand. By now, all were reduced to boney frames with skin that resembled taut and broken parchment stretched over it. No one thought of escape, they simply waited for the inevitable. Each man wrote a final message and these were placed together with the understanding that any survivors would see to it that the last farewells of these doomed men were posted to their families.

One by one, the men fell victims. Each in turn recapitulated the death agony of the last and the dwindling survivors buried each in the burning sand. Then the day came when there was but one survivor, a Czechoslovak, who, utterly worn out by ceaseless vigil and constant strain of alternate nursing and burial, lay down alone to die.

He did not die. Instead his strength flowed back and within a week he knew that he was saved. The Russian guards, who had never entered the prisoners' barracks during the worst days of the plague now cautiously put in an appearance, and after prolonged and stupid discussion over "orders," finally set the restored man free.

Dragging himself over the desert, he made his slow return to the land of the living, his knapsack packed with his comrades' letters. Some days later, he reached a small outpost, himself a walking skeleton, the sole survivor of "The Fiery Death."

Of course, not every prisoner of war had such extreme experiences. There were many camps in Russia where humane treatment prevailed. There were many farmers with heart and compassion, many Russian officers and soldiers of like

humanity; some even recognized the Czechoslovaks as Slavs themselves.

False passes allowed some prisoners to go to the nearest town, find a job and escape the prison atmosphere. They learned not to be finicky and developed a good bit of versatility – teachers and salesmen became porters, bricklayers, carpenters or cotton pickers. Life could be endured if one put a bit of philosophy and humor into it.

Soon the Czech and Slovak war prisoners began to organize with the objective of securing permission to join the Russian army. The Czech Legion and the Russian Czechs sent commissioners to the camps to encourage such organization, to stir these men into consciousness of their patriotic duty and, when possible, to enlist recruits for the Legion. A news sheet printed in Petrograd was circulated widely among the prisoners, and every means used to prepare for a mass movement into the army when the time should be ripe. By 1917, with 40,000 men enlisted in the Czechoslovak Legion, the time was ripe.

Chapter 10

Anabasis of the Czechoslovaks

While I was becoming acquainted with the Czechoslovak Legionnaires in that little village in the Ukraine, listening to their war experiences, speculation was rife as to what the future held for them.

The political situation in the Ukraine was indeed confused. While an Ukrainian government had been set up within the Federated Soviet Republic of Russia, there were many Ukrainians who wanted national independence and they were not above seeking the backing of the Germans to accomplish that end. The commanding officer of the Czechoslovak Legion felt it best to move all of his forces nearer to Kiev. The troops I was serving at Polonnoe were transferred to Zhitomir, a city of about 60,000 population near Kiev. Despite the rapid evacuation of Polonnoe the men managed to disassemble the portable huts I had used as a club and load them on flat cars. Someone must have taken very good care of them, for three months later I found my huts on a railroad siding 2,000 miles away in Siberia. In Zhitomir I was able to rent a theatre where I could show movies and I opened a small canteen for the further entertainment of the soldiers.

Soon it was time to move again. This time we were in a hurry, for the Germans were reported to be advancing rapidly and in force. The troops had a four-day forced march through slimy black mud, with the Germans pressing them hard and even skirmishing with the rear guard. When I came through Kiev with the troops I found that the American Consul and the other Allied representatives had already left. The men pressed on and joined forces with their Second Division, so that for the first time the entire army corps was united. What was to be the next move? The Germans were pushing us, their scout aeroplanes were flying over our heads, escape seemed impossible.

Professor Masaryk had already anticipated this contingency by concluding negotiations with the French government whereby the Czechoslovak army corps was declared an integral part of the French Army, with transport to France guaranteed. Only one exit route lay open to us from Russia – by way of Siberia to Vladivostok. In an incredibly short time railroad rolling stock was seized, the soldiers entrained and the long trek across Russia and Siberia was begun. It was an amazing undertaking. As planned, it involved 5,000 miles of travel to Vladivostok, securing transports there for crossing the Pacific to America, and thence across the Atlantic to France.

So began a journey, the like of which has never been described save in Xenophon's

classic. Our departure was hurried by the Germans who threatened to cut off our retreat by taking Bakhmach, a jungle of passes. But with machine-guns mounted on the locomotives our trains rattled safely away to the interior of Russia.

Throughout all of these turbulent days of revolution and internal strife, Masaryk had insisted on the strictest neutrality for the Czechoslovak troops. There was to be no involvement in factional strife within Russia. Although the Czechoslovaks from Masaryk down to the privates in the ranks shared decided opinions about Bolshevism and had been bitterly disappointed at the developments in the winter of 1917-1918, they took the position that the internal problems of the Soviets were no affair of theirs as long as they were not blocked in their avowed intention to fight the Central Powers for the independence of Bohemia. Masaryk had taught the Czechoslovaks that the way to true internationalism led through healthy nationalism, and it seemed impossible to them that the Russian people, never having known real patriotism, could become internationalists in one step as both Lenin and Trotsky argued. For these Czechoslovak troops the concept of socialism was not difficult; in fact many of them were already committed to its principles. They knew the Russian language and the Russian people. Slavs themselves, they understood Slavic psychology, and they were still loyal to Russia, sympathetic to the Russian people. Hence their rejection of the Bolshevik program was particularly significant, for of all the non-Russians who were eye-witnesses of the revolution events, these Slavic cousins were in the best position to understand the significance and meaning of the revolution.

The Czechoslovak troops being safely out of Ukraine, Professor Masaryk left for America on March 7, 1918. In his farewell message to the army he wrote:

I am leaving you today at this time to act as your quartermaster in France where I hope we shall meet again. I trust that then all of the men now in prison camps will be in the army. I take great satisfaction from the fact that we have been able to form an army corps and I am even more pleased that through all of these troublous times we have succeeded in maintaining our unity unimpaired. There is political power in our unity which guarantees safety to the individual and is a constant warning to our enemies.

In France and Italy we shall still be battling for Russia. We wanted to fight side by side with our Russian brothers, and we made a promising beginning at Zborov. We regret that in the name of Russia a one-sided peace has been concluded with Germany. But that is all the more the reason why in hospitable France we shall strive for victory over Austria-Hungary and Germany, for such a victory will strengthen Russia also. Even in the face of all that has taken place we believe in the future of the Russian people.

As long as you are in Russia, maintain as you have so far, strict neutrality in the internal

strife. Only that Slavic nation and that party is our enemy which openly joins forces with the enemy.

In accordance with these principles, when it was decided to make the trek to France, via Siberia, arrangements were made with the Soviet government to permit uninterrupted passage of the troops on trains to Vladivostok. At that point it was decided that all arms and military equipment in the possession of the Czechoslovak army were to be turned over to the Soviet authorities upon arrival at Vladivostok. But, as a matter of fact, at Penza only ten rifles per train were allowed to the passing Czechoslovaks by the Bolsheviks.

With their safe passage out of Russia guaranteed, and with the German invaders left behind, all thoughts were centered on the journey across Siberia. Those of us who were with the troops will never forget the enthusiasm with which the journey began. We were leaving Russia and its internal strife and disorder, to join other men who really wanted to fight for freedom. To do this, we were to journey around the world, across Siberia, across the Pacific, across America! There was a heady excitement in the very thought. When the trains stopped in wooded areas, the boys jumped out to gather armfuls of flowers and evergreen branches. With these they decorated their *teplushkas* (freight cars with a stove inside) with flags and drawings, with cartoons and inscriptions, until the troop trains looked like a traveling circus. The Russian people gazed with open-eyed wonder as the 40 trains passed station after station. *Z dálky do dálky, Z války do války.* (From afar to afar, from war to war.) "Down with Austrian tyranny!" "Jan Hus died but his spirit still lives." "Be of good cheer, Bohemia, thou still hast loyal sons and brave." These were some of the inscriptions emblazoned on the freight cars under drawings often made with real artistic skill. As the men traveled across Russia and Siberia, they would make a list in paint or chalk on the outside of the freight car of the towns in the Czech lands and Slovakia represented by the forty men who were riding in that particular car. I witnessed many glad reunions as a Legionnaire running alongside the train caught sight of the name of his home town – perhaps Borová or Široký Důl; he would call out "Who is here from Borová?" and a boyhood chum would appear.

Meanwhile we Americans were full of anticipation too. We wanted to show our country to these boys and to have our countrymen share our pride in them. I even had a schoolroom set up in a freight car and during the long halts and delays, we prepared for the days ahead by conducting classes in French and English which were attended with hopeful enthusiasm.

For a while the troop trains proceeded as rapidly as one could expect forty trains to move along a railroad whose service was disrupted and disorganized by the civil war.

But when the advance guard had reached Penza, an important railroad center in central Russia, there ensued a long and thoroughly exasperating, unaccountable delay. Days passed and not a wheel moved; questions filled the air, but no answers. Finally it developed that the local Penza Soviet, casting envious eyes upon the arms and ammunition of the Czechoslovaks, was bringing pressure to bear upon Moscow to rescind its earlier guarantee and compel the Czechoslovaks to give up their arms at once.

In their eagerness to move on, the Czechoslovak leaders finally compromised with the Soviet authorities to the extent of agreeing to give up all arms except for ten rifles per train; these to be retained for self-protection. The Soviet government on its part agreed to facilitate the transportation of the troops to Vladivostok.

With this understanding the trains began to move again, and the first trains, those of the Fifth and Eighth regiments, went through to Vladivostok in surprisingly short time. The other trains did not fare as well. At several other places en route, notably at Samara, the local Soviets (councils) demanded tribute in the shape of additional rifles in return for letting the trains pass through. These breaches of faith on the part of the Soviet government and the many petty annoyances to which the men were subjected by local Soviet bureaucrats showed clearly that the Bolsheviks were convinced that they were dealing with enemies.

The patience of the Czechoslovaks was sorely tried, especially so when, after approximately one third of the trains had passed through on their way to Siberia, others were held up at Cheliabinsk, on the fringe of the Urals, or at Penza. Days passed; then weeks; and the trains stood still. Rumor after rumor was circulated to explain the delay. At last came an apparently authoritative report from Moscow that it was the decision of the Soviet government to transport the remaining Czechoslovak troops to the port of Murmansk instead of Vladivostok. This report caused indignant consternation among the soldiers, for they were convinced that the Soviet government was determined upon their destruction as a fighting force.

Meantime an incident occurred which was destined to precipitate matters and provoke open conflict. While the troop trains were standing at Cheliabinsk, I saw train after train of German and Austrian prisoners of war pass en route from the prison camps in Siberia for home. As this was the time (May 1918) of the great German offensive on the western front, it was obvious that these prisoners were being sent home with the consent of the Soviets, to strengthen the armies of the Central Powers. It was a galling thought for the Czechoslovaks. While they were held up, impotent and *hors de combat*, enemy troops were being hurried past them to fight against the Allies. Every such trainful meant added strength to Germany and danger to the Allies and to the Czechoslovak cause.

On May 2nd, as one of these trains bearing German prisoners of war was pulling out of the station, someone within threw an iron bar which struck a Czechoslovak soldier and felled him to the ground, apparently dead. His comrades, hot with indignation, stormed the train, stopped the engine, sought out the guilty person and, in the heat of the moment, killed him.[59]

This unfortunate act was immediately investigated by the Czechoslovak military authorities and steps were taken to punish the perpetrators. The local Soviet instigated a summary investigation of its own, called a number of Czechoslovak soldiers as witnesses, and promptly put them under arrest. The Czechoslovak authorities protested this action, sending a delegation to the Soviet demanding their release. This resulted in the arrest of the delegation, whereupon the commanding officer of the Czechoslovaks, Colonel Vojtěchovský,[60] ordered out his forces, seized the railroad station and the nearby arsenal, armed his men, and marched toward the town. At this display of force the local authorities capitulated and released the prisoners. Then the Czechoslovaks, their objective obtained, returned to the trains carrying the arms to which they had helped themselves.

The local Soviet was naturally greatly affronted by these events, and after vainly seeking to persuade the Czechoslovaks to return the arms, appealed to Moscow to punish them. Moscow was quick to act, and within a few days a message came from Trotsky, calling upon the Czechoslovak troops to give up all of their arms; further instructing the local Soviets to carry out the order by force, and, if necessary, to intern the Czechoslovak troops in prison camps.

After this, events proceeded rapidly. The local Soviets at various points along the line of the railroad laid down an ultimatum to the Czechoslovak troop trains ordering immediate delivery of all arms and ammunition on pain of forcible detention in prison camps and reduction to the status of prisoners of war. The Bolsheviks apparently felt safe in counting upon the easy submission of the Czechoslovaks to their terms, humiliating though they were. By this time the

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[59] In his journal, KDM writes about Magyar prisoners of war as being involved in this incident, reports a brick, not an iron bar, and the event (generally known as the "Cheliabinsk incident") is described in entries dated May 9 – May 14. See Appendix 2. Victor Fic in his "The Bolsheviks and the Czechoslovak Legion" writes about "a piece of iron" and places the event on May 14, 1918 (the same date also by T.G. Masaryk in his "Světová revoluce").

[60] Sergei Nikolaevich Voitsekhovskii (1883-1954) – officer in the Imperial Russian Army before his involvement with the Legion, after the civil war in Russia emigrated to Czechoslovakia, became General of the Army, commanding a major military district there. In May 1945, he was arrested by the Soviet secret service (NKVD) and sent to a *gulag* in Vorkuta, Arctic Russia, where he died.

Czechoslovaks were in no mood to be trifled with. At the cost of much personal sacrifice and patient planning they had formed a fighting unit, which was now on its way to fight for a great cause. They did not propose to lose all that they had gained, nor to allow their further progress to be impeded. Also they knew what it was to be prisoners of war, and they had no intention of returning to that hated status, much less at the hands of the Bolsheviks whom they felt to be responsible for negating any good results stemming from the Russian revolution. Furthermore, they were infuriated by the presence in the ranks of the Red Army of thousands of Germans and Magyars, enlisted by the Bolsheviks from the prison camps. This was regarded as a German plot to destroy the Czechoslovak army, and as officers and men alike were convinced that they were confronted with a question of life and death, they viewed it as a battle for their very existence. Consequently, even recalling Masaryk's strict injunctions against interfering in Russian internal affairs could not stay their action. They reasoned, "If Masaryk were here he would not let us be disgraced and degraded by the Bolsheviks." In every place where the ultimatum was presented it was instantly and indignantly refused. Thereupon the Red Guard opened fire upon the Czechoslovaks and so the great fight began.

The first news that reached us at Cheliabinsk was of a skirmish at Mariansk, near Omsk. Immediately the word came, the station yard burst into action. Locomotives were fired and trains made ready for immediate departure. The men cleaned their rifles and in no time trains were leaving in four directions, Cheliabinsk being a junction point. The faces of the officers were set and stern. They had some prevision of what lay ahead, but the men sat in the doorways of their *teplushkas* and sang and shouted as the trains pulled out. "Pojedem bílit krásne," (Now to whitewash the Reds) was their cry; clearly they were overjoyed at this chance to show the Bolsheviks that the Czechoslovaks should not be ordered about.

The Bolsheviks evidently had not expected the Czechoslovaks to offer armed opposition to their demands and accordingly they were caught unprepared. The Czechoslovaks struck swiftly and gained important successes before their opponents actually realized what was going on.

At first victories came too easily, but the cautious Czechoslovaks were not deceived into undue optimism. Things might indeed be going smoothly at Cheliabinsk, where a large number of men were concentrated, but great anxiety was felt for the fate of other detachments more or less isolated at other points on the railroad. In particular there was concern over the fate of one train bearing the staff of the First Regiment which had been caught in the midst of the Ural Mountains when the trouble began. The anxiety was naturally increased when word came that this train was ambushed by the Reds, a large number of Czechoslovaks killed and wounded.

It was further reported that the remnant had abandoned the train and fled into the mountains. The truth about the matter filtered through a few days later and constitutes one of the most amazing and heroic actions, among many such in this saga.

1. Portrait of Kenneth D. Miller as a young man, 1916

2. Portrait of Kenneth Dexter Miller in Y.M.C.A. uniform, 1918

3. Kenneth Dexter Miller and a group of his co-workers portrayed in front of a building (his "sausage factory") featuring sausages hanging on the wall in Cheliabinsk, Russia, July 1918

4. Armored freight cars with Czechoslovak Legion soldiers in Russia, 1918 or 1919

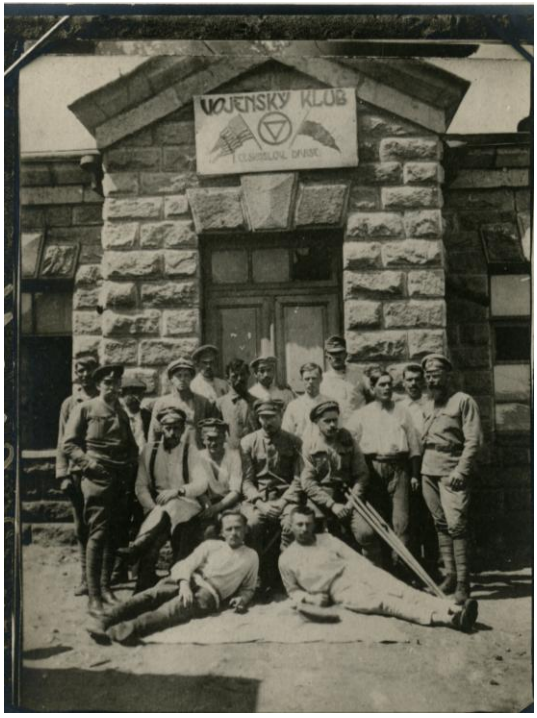
5. Building on corner formerly Anarchist headquarters. Later headquarters of Czech commandant, Samara, Russia, 1918

6. Czechoslovak troops being transported across river to attack Bolsheviks – hand-powered ferry, 1918 or 1919

7. Crossing the Urals en route for Vladivostok, April 1918

8. Lining up for a cup of hot coffee with the thermometer at 40 below - travelling Y.M.C.A. hut, 1918 or 1919

9. In a Y.M.C.A. car, travelling Y.M.C.A. hut, 1918 or 1919



10. K. D. Miller pictured with a group of Czechoslovak soldiers in front of his Y.M.C.A. "Soldiers' Club of the 1st Czechoslovak Division" in Cheliabinsk, Russia, 1918

11. K.D. Miller portrayed on December 25, 1918 in Cheliabinsk, Russia with a group of Czech soldiers who assisted him in his Y.M.C.A. work with the Legion in Russia, Alois Vymětal first from left in first row

12. Group of Czechoslovak Legionnaires inside a train car made into their living quarters

13. Czechoslovak train traveling through the Ural Mountains, 1918 or 1919

14. Czechoslovak train leaving Cheliabinsk for the front, June 1918

15. Lying - Vojta, Lexa seated - Robertson, Kožíšek, Alexander, Beaverson, Hoofer - Omsk, Feb. 1, 1919 - Thermometer 40 degrees below! (*caption by KDM*)

16. Kenneth Dexter Miller, Rev. Vincent Písek and Charles Atherton standing in front of the Y.M.C.A. office in Vladivostok, Russia, 1919

17. Kenneth Dexter Miller, Vlasta Vráz and Waitstill Sharp photographed in Silesia during their visit of Czechoslovakia as part of the American Relief for Czechoslovakia, 1946

18. Kenneth Dexter Miller and Vlasta Vráz from American Relief for Czechoslovakia meeting with Edvard Beneš, President of Czechoslovakia, his Moravian summer residence, July 1946

Chapter 11

Ambushed in the Urals

We sat, officers and men, in the Y.M.C.A. soldiers' club at Cheliabinsk, listening to the story of ambush, bravery, luck and common sense, determining the fate of the train.

This particular train carried the Headquarters Staff of the First Regiment, the oldest unit of the Army, the original Czech Legionnaires, heroes of many engagements with the German and Austrian forces on the Eastern Front. For the most part those attached to the Staff of the Regiment were non-combatants, engineers, telephone operators, musicians, bakers, clerks and the like. This train had been sent on ahead of those bearing the fighting units of the regiment, and when the story opens it is standing on a siding near the station of Zlatoust, in the heart of the Ural Mountains. A Staff Captain speaks:

We had been waiting there at Zlatoust for some days and, although we enjoyed the mountain scenery, we were naturally anxious to be off on our way to Vladivostok. We had no news of the outside world, and we were quite unaware of the skirmishes that had occurred between the Bolsheviks and our units farther east in Siberia.

Finally, the word was given for departure. All of our grumbling at the irksome delays to which we had been subjected was forgotten in the certainty of the longed-for advance. Still, some more seasoned soldiers believed in constant preparedness and had rifles and hand-grenades at the ready. A switch engine was coupled to our train, presumably to shunt us onto the main track, but instead of stopping when the main track was reached, our train was pulled beyond the station to a railroad cut with sharp banks on either side. As we entered the cut, machine guns barked and splinters began to fly from the walls of the car. We were ambushed!

At the first moment of attack, every man jack dropped instinctively to the floor. About sixty of us seized whatever came to hand and jumped from the still moving train. Some had guns, a few hand-grenades but most of us were unarmed and some of the men had been resting and were clad only in their underclothes. The train swept on by us, disappeared around a curve with the rest of the men aboard. We had no choice but to charge those hidden gunners. Clambering up the steep sides of the cut, we made straight for the machine-guns, yelling like mad men. A few managed to fix their bayonets; one fellow grasped his and rushed up the hill brandishing it like a dagger. Another, entirely unarmed, fell upon the first man he encountered and with one powerful twist, tore the gun from his hands. One of the bakers who had been at work at this oven, half-naked, seized an enormous rock and with it felled a machine-gunner to the ground. A well-aimed grenade did for one of the machine-guns and its crew. The remaining Reds fled in confusion.

Thirty-five of our boys lay dead or wounded.

Reinforcements soon arrived from the train. Civilians from nearby houses came out to help with the wounded. But what were we to do now? No one knew how many troops the Bolsheviks had at Zlatoust; nor did we know what might be the situation at other towns further along the line. First, of course, we had to make certain of our immediate safety. The train was run back twenty versts west of Zlatoust beyond a river and patrols were stationed on all sides to guard it. Finally, a Bolshevik commissar arrived from Zlatoust. 'Give up your arms and we will begin to treat with you,' was his ultimatum. 'No such thing,' was our reply. But we were in a bad fix. If we waited there much longer, the Bolsheviks could bring up a few cannon, train them on us and that would be the end. We did not even consider surrendering. The only alternative was to abandon the train and strike out for Cheliabinsk on foot. But even if we risked the hazards of a seventy mile trek over unknown mountains, there was still the question of what to do with the wounded whom we could not transport. They themselves settled that question. One of them spoke up and said, 'Don't worry about us; we'll be taken care of somehow. Besides, there are only thirty of us and four hundred of you. Go, and be quick about it, lest all of us be lost.'

So it was decided to strike out on foot. Our ranking officer, Havel, had nothing to guide him but a compass and a small railroad map. He decided to leave the line of the railroad and make for Cheliabinsk by a circuitous route which would avoid large settlements where Bolshevik soldiers might be. Havel estimated that we could reach Cheliabinsk in seven days. So we set out, and the last thing we heard as we disappeared into the woods was the voice of one of the wounded men calling out a brave and cheerful 'Na Zdar' (Good Luck).[61]

At first we hiked at a stiff pace, anxious to put as great a distance as possible between us and the railroad, but shortly we were halted by a swollen mountain stream. The current was so rapid that it almost overwhelmed the first men who waded into it; one of them was pulled out literally by his hair as he was being swept down-stream. Finally a place was found where a few could cross, and joining hands, they formed a lifeline to aid the rest of us who crossed with no mishap beyond a complete soaking. We were forced to abandon the two machine-guns which we had captured. Our regimental band, the army's pride, had to leave behind its base drum and the cart in which they carried it. But worse was the loss of Olga. Olga was the pony who for years had pulled the drum on its carriage. She got over the stream safely but later that day fell from a cliff and had to be shot. The poor musicians! They had lost all their music, then the drum, and now Olga, their mascot through many campaigns. Men who had not batted an eye when bullets rained thick about them broke down and cried when Olga had to be killed.

We pushed on steadily throughout that day, sometimes over low and swampy ground, sometimes over hills where the winter snows still lay in drifts. For the most part we beat our way through thick underbrush, only occasionally finding and following cuts made by the foresters. Not until late in the afternoon did we stop to brew some tea and heat our tinned

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[61] This is the recognized greeting of the Sokol organization and as such was adopted by the Czechoslovak Legion. (*Note by KDM*)

beef. When darkness fell, the fires were extinguished for fear of betraying our location. The few men with firearms were deployed in a circle about the encampment, keeping watch in relays while the others slept with guns beside them. The other men wrapped themselves in their overcoats and lay down close together to keep each other warm.

At day-break the march was resumed. The men now began to feel the high romance of this adventure. The very difficulties of the hike, the sense of lurking danger, together with the beauties of this mountain forest budding with spring was such a contrast to the drab life we had been living in those box-cars for the past few months that the boys' spirits rose and we were soon talking and joking together as if it were just a holiday tramp.

Every so often Havel would call a halt while he climbed a tall tree to reconnoiter. Finally he sighted an open valley ahead of with a broad flooded river winding through it. There seemed to be only one way to cross it, and that was by means of a bridge which led into a small village on the other side. We had decided to keep away from human habitations, but there seemed no help for it. So an armed patrol was sent ahead to take possession of the bridge and guard it while we all passed over. We were ordered to take the red and white ribbons off our caps and to proceed through the village without a word, so that the people could not identify us. Quite evidently they were astonished and grateful that we had not requisitioned any food, for after a while two carts came clattering after us filled with bread which the villagers had sent, apparently out of gratitude for not being disturbed.

By the third day we were sorry-looking objects. Our uniforms were soaked through and plastered with mud, our coats were thick with burrs and thistles. Only a few bayonets, guns and the musical instruments which the bandsmen carried on a cord about their waists, remained to remind us that we had once been part of an army. Nevertheless the men were in high spirits, enjoying this vagabond experience, bathing in the icy mountain stream and sitting around the campfire in the evening.

At noon we encountered a couple of Bashkirs. In their broken Russian, these Tartar tribesmen invited us to come to their village and buy bread. We followed them and were thankful to discover that their village was situated on one of the last slopes on the eastern side of the Urals. Ahead of us lay the steppes where the going would be easier than in the mountains. These villagers were most hospitable, and brought out quantities of white bread, goat's milk and cheese, for which they refused to accept any pay. They were so isolated from the world that they knew nothing of any fighting, and apparently had seen no soldiers. We distributed lumps of sugar among the children, and the band played a few pieces for their benefit although it mortified the bandmaster to be obliged to play without the base drum. We shall never forget those Bashkirs, we call them 'our brothers' and whenever I see one of those round dark heads with the slanting eyes, I feel grateful in recollection of their kindness.

During the day some tribesmen came in from a trip 'out into the world.' They brought startling news. It seemed that, at the nearest railroad town called Miass, about thirty versts away,[62] some foreigners called Czechoslovaks had appeared, overthrown the Bolshevik government and taken control of things themselves. Of course, we had no way of knowing

[62] 1 verst = .66 mile (1.066 km).

all that had happened at Cheliabinsk those last few days and we could hardly believe that this report could be true. But one of our boys named Bar volunteered to go and investigate. He disguised himself quite successfully as a Bashkir, donning an old sheep skin coat and cap. Borrowing a horse, and with a Bashkir boy as guide, he rode off across the steppes promising to be back in the morning.

Morning came and no Bar, but we set off in the direction of Miass hoping to meet him on the way back. Hours passed and no sign of our courier. Instead our scouts reported that they had seen some armed horsemen who looked suspiciously like Reds. Finally, however, a horseman appeared on the steppes ahead of us riding like mad. It was Bar. Jumping off his horse, he breathlessly told his story. It was true! Our boys were at Miass, having captured the town the day after the open conflict with the Soviets at Cheliabinsk. Our boys were wild with joy; they threw their hats into the air and shouted to their commander, 'Come on, let's get going.'

Towards evening a lone rider appeared. He was dressed like a Russian peasant and carried a gun across his back. We stopped in our tracks and watched him as he rode straight toward us. Was this friend or foe? On and on he came until he was within hailing distance, then he took his cap and waved it high over his head, and across the steppes there came a ringing '*Na Zdar, Bratři'* (brothers). Relief and thanksgiving and unlimited enthusiasm mingled in their rousing '*Na Zdar*' that rose spontaneously from four hundred throats. We were among our own once more, and it mattered nothing now that we were wet through, muddy and as ragged as beggars. We were safe. Now to drink our fill of good Russian tea and to enjoy at last long sleep under a sheltering roof.

The irony of it all is that the very next day these four hundred men went into action again after a surprise attack by the Bolshevik forces upon the garrison at Miass. Twenty of the four hundred were killed, but there was glory in their death for we beat off the attack and after all, that was what we had set out to do.

Chapter 12

The conquest of Siberia

During the period of anxiety as to the fate of the trainful of men in the Russian interior, I waited in Cheliabinsk, a city just east of the Ural Mountains on the border between Russia and Siberia, a sort of no man's land between Europe and Asia. It proved to be a highly strategic point, being an important railroad junction with main lines running east, west, north and south.

The railroad running north led to Yekaterinburg (now called Sverdlovsk). Here the Czar and his family were imprisoned and then murdered by the Bolsheviks.[63] No doubt the approach of the Czech army in that direction led to fears that these important prisoners might possibly be freed from captivity. I came into Yekaterinburg with the Czechoslovak troops and we immediately heard all the lurid details about the cold-blooded slaughter of the royal family. I was even taken out into the forest to see the abandoned mine shaft into which the cremated remains of these victims were cast. In view of later episodes and stories about Princess Anastasia, I should say that although I heard many first-hand and detailed accounts of all that had happened three days before we arrived, I heard no mention whatsoever of anyone of the prisoners making an escape.[64] We were told that the entire royal family was wiped out.

Cheliabinsk became the focal point to which couriers came with dispatches for the general staff which had located here. It happened that I was the lone American and the only Allied representative at Cheliabinsk at this critical time, and consequently I was asked to sit in at the conferences of the political and military leaders in order to report decisions made by the Czechoslovak staff. Hence I had constant, first-hand knowledge of the strategy as it evolved. The account of the activities in Russia and Siberia related in this chapter is therefore based upon original sources.

My location at Cheliabinsk also facilitated expansion of the program of the Y.M.C.A. Naturally, in the confusion and tension of those first days at Cheliabinsk any thought of continuing the teaching of English and French was abandoned. Men's minds were completely occupied with the present danger, side-tracking for a time the cherished images of America and France. The Soldiers' Club by the railroad station became a most important center filling a great need of recreation and

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[63] Named Sverdlovsk after the revolutionary leader Yakov M. Sverdlov in 1924. Sverdlovsk re-named back to Yekaterinburg in 1991. The royal family was killed on July 17, 1918.
[64] According to his Journal, KDM arrived in Yekaterinburg on August 1, 1918.

diversion. Meanwhile we developed a broader program at the base-hospital nearby, travelling club cars and an expanded canteen and other services which will be described in the next chapter.

More than a week passed before any word was received at Cheliabinsk from the Penza group 800 miles to the west, and great fears were felt lest they had been annihilated. Penza was well in the interior of Russia not far from the Soviet headquarters at Moscow, so it would have been comparatively easy for the Reds to descend in overwhelming numbers and completely isolate the Czechoslovak detachments from their comrades in Siberia. It was essential, therefore, that the Penza group strike quickly, before the Bolsheviks could assemble their forces. Yet day after longer day passed and still no word from Penza.

Then one evening, the news came through of a fierce battle for possession of the city of Penza, resulting in a great victory for the Czechoslovaks, the capture of the city together with many prisoners and much arms and ammunition. The report stated further that Penza had been immediately abandoned and that our troops were pressing on as fast as possible towards the Volga. Would the Reds be quick enough to blow up the bridge over which our men must pass? This terrible uncertainty possessed us, but the good news came that we held the bridge and the Volga flowed behind our troops.

Samara[65], where the Reds were known to be strong, was the next obstacle. A terrific battle took place before Samara, with heavy losses on both sides. The commander of the 4th Czechoslovak regiment was killed; his men were mad with grief over his death and fought the more determinedly because of it. That battle, won at great cost, brought the Czechoslovaks to the city gates. Here again a railroad bridge over the Samara River threatened another block to further progress. By a swift push under cover of heavy artillery fire, this bridge was successfully taken and our men entered the city in triumph. With the capture of Samara, we knew that it would only be a short time before a connection was made with the troops who were pushing rapidly back across the Urals to meet them. When, indeed, on July 6th, the two forces made connection, there was unrestrained rejoicing; the menace from the west was gone and all energy could be concentrated on the eastern push across Siberia.

At this point in the campaign, there were eight or ten train-loads of Czechoslovaks in Siberia scattered all along the line of the Trans-Siberian Railway with no more than one train in any one place.

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[65] From 1935 to 1991 the city of Samara was called Kuibyshev, after Valerian V. Kuibyshev, another revolutionary leader.

Unfortunately there was no Czechoslovak officer in western Siberia at the time but in this emergency a leader arose who was destined for a heroic role in the days ahead. This man was Colonel Gajda, then second in command of the Seventh Czechoslovak Regiment.[66] He was a dashing young officer, twenty-eight years of age. Gajda was determined to unite the scattered Czechoslovak units in Siberia. From the beginning he conducted a whirlwind campaign, again and again surprising and out-maneuvering enemy forces of vastly superior strength. Approaching an important city with one poorly armed train, he dispatched an ultimatum to the commander of the large garrison there, "If your surrender is not received in twenty-four hours, I shall blow up the town." Ignorant of the fact that Gajda had but one field gun, the commander surrendered at once. On another occasion, finding his one company confronted by a much larger force, Gajda used his mother wit to good effect. Shouting his commands in Russian so that the Reds could understand, "First battalion to the left, third battalion in the center. Prepare to attack!" And the Bolsheviks, supposing that an entire regiment was opposing them, fled in confusion without even offering battle! At times Gajda would send a part of his men around on a flanking movement, tear up the tracks behind a Bolshevik detachment and then attack them from both sides, his men shouting and yelling like Apaches and giving the impression of vast numbers. By such tactics, Gajda succeeded in establishing connections between all the trains in western Siberia. He then set about the more difficult task of pushing on east to join the Vladivostok group which was supposed to be already on its way back.

An unfortunate armistice arranged by French and American officials had given the Soviet forces in eastern Siberia time to assemble a large force. Red troops previously dispatched against Semenov,[67] in Manchuria, were recalled to face the Czechs. The Reds wisely decided to fall back on Lake Baikal and make their last stand there; indeed they could hardly have chosen a more impregnable position. The Trans-Siberian Railway follows the shore of Lake Baikal for more than a hundred miles and as the mountains come down to the lake at many points, it had been necessary

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[66] Radola Gajda (1892-1948), born Rudolf Geidl. After his return to Czechoslovakia, Gajda had a problematic career as politician, was involved in the founding of the National Fascist Organization (1926), became its leader in 1927. Follower – in some respects – of Benito Mussolini's Italian fascism, he opposed German Nazism and advocated for a war with Hitler's Germany over the Sudetenland in 1938. After World War II Gajda was imprisoned by the Soviets and died shortly after his release.

[67] Ataman Grigorii Mikhailovich Semenov (1890-1946) – an anti-Bolshevik leader in the Trans-Baikal region, forced to go into exile in 1921, captured by the Soviets in 1945 in Manchuria and executed a year later.

to construct a series of thirty-nine railroad tunnels. Here in the midst of these tunnels, the Reds decided to make their stand. On one side was the lake; on the other, almost impassable mountains. As the destruction of a single tunnel would effectively block progress along the railroad for many months, Colonel Gajda was most anxious not to force the Reds into a position when they would blow up the tunnels in self-defense.

He laid his plans carefully. One detachment, with all the heavy artillery he could command, was dispatched to the eastern side of Lake Baikal. There, a steam boat was captured and fitted out as a gun boat. He then sent a strong force up into the mountains to the south, arming them with hand grenades. This detachment fought its way through the wild mountain forests finally arriving at its objective, a point overlooking the railroad just ahead of the first tunnel. There they awaited Gajda's next move. He caused telegrams to be sent along the line announcing that the Czechoslovaks had met with a reversal and had decided to retreat beyond Irkutsk. Then he began to withdraw his train in that direction. The credulous Bolsheviks, believing this to be the time to strike, rushed their trains ahead and out of the tunnels in pursuit of the supposedly fleeing Czechoslovaks. As the last train passed out of the first tunnel, the men who were on the mountain side overlooking the track rushed down, tore up the rails to prevent retreat and fell upon the rear of the Bolsheviks. Whereupon Gajda reversed his trains and turned upon the enemy. The waiting gun boat at this juncture drew near and began to bombard the Red trains. Hemmed in on all sides, the Red Army, the last obstacle in the way of a free passage to Vladivostok, was completely wiped out as a fighting force in Eastern Siberia.

After this great victory, Gajda was soon able to push his way eastward into Manchuria and effect a union with those troops who had indeed reached Vladivostok, but had turned back to the assistance of their comrades in the west when word of the fighting reached them. And so, on September 6th, a little over three months after the incident at Cheliabinsk, the entire railroad from Samara to Vladivostok, a distance of 3,000 miles,[68] was in Czechoslovak control. It was incredible that such cities as Samara, Kazan, Yekaterinburg, Omsk, Tomsk, Novonikolaevsk, Krasnoyarsk, Irkutsk, Chita and Vladivostok could be captured (in so short a time) by one small group fighting over unknown terrain. Yet Bolshevik power had been wiped out totally in Siberia and in Russia east of the Volga. The way now seemed open for the Czechoslovaks to complete their original plan without

[68] Theoretical air distance between Samara and Vladivostok is 3,600 miles; the distance between the two cities by rail today (from Chita to Vladivostok along the Russian line via Khabarovsk, rather than through Chinese Manchuria) is over 5,000 miles.

further opposition and to proceed to Vladivostok, embarking there for America and France.

During this lighting campaign, the Czechoslovaks had placed their force on a war basis, reorganizing the army. The Russian officers who had carried on with the Czechoslovaks at the outset were released. Certain Czechoslovak Legionnaires, veterans of four years of campaigning, were promoted to more important posts as regimental and divisional commanders. General Jan Syrový was selected as Commander-in-Chief, General Čeček as Commander of the First Division[69] and General Gajda of the Second.[70] Syrový had enlisted in the Czech Legion at the outset of the war. He served brilliantly in the Russian army as a commander of a reconnaissance unit, losing an eye in the Battle of Zborov. To those who knew their Czech history and remembered the pictures of Jan Žižka, the doughty Hussite warrior with a patch over his lost eye, there was something symbolic in the picture of another one-eyed general leading Czechoslovak warriors into battle.

Swiftly, efficiently and with grim determination, this army was whipped into an effective, fighting unit, determined to clear the way for its passage to Vladivostok and beyond. The news of their remarkable exploits had reached the outside world and people who hitherto never even heard of the Czechoslovaks were now loud in their praise.

Masaryk, who was in America at the time trying to interest official circles in the idea of Czechoslovak independence, found his task simplified and his cause tremendously helped by the successes of that remarkable army of 40,000 men.[71] Now that the general public knew who the Czechoslovaks were, the feeling was wide-spread that a nation which could produce an army capable of such remarkable deeds was surely ready for independence. So the Siberian campaign, inaugurated as a measure of self-defense and self-preservation, proved to be a fight for national independence, indeed a demonstration of the right to such independence. Furthermore, these events occurred at a psychological moment; the war was drawing to a close and the Allies were in the midst of their last great drive. It was obvious that Germany could not hold out much longer, while in Austria there were definite

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[69] Jan Syrový (1888-1970).
Stanislav Čeček (1886-1930).

[70] Gajda's promotion was well-deserved. After returning home, however, his reputation suffered greatly from unfortunate political machinations. (*Note by KDM*)

[71] The estimates cited in various sources (see bibliography at the end of the biographical essay) range most frequently between 40,000 and 60,000. However, T.G. Masaryk (officially the Commander-in-Chief of the Legion) in his "Světová revoluce"(1925) on p. 336 gives the number of men in the Czechoslovak Legion in Russia as 92,000.

signs of breakdown. The Czechs at home, made bolder by the startling deeds of their countrymen in Siberia, were becoming more out-spoken in their talk of revolution. Already it was clear that their cause was practically won. At Philadelphia, Masaryk made his great declaration of the rights of the smaller nations[72] and President Wilson, ever emphasizing the "right of the self-determination of nations" had mentioned the Czechoslovaks specifically as a group which should be accorded independence when the peace treaties should be effected.

[72] At Philadelphia's Independence Hall, on October 26, 1918.

Chapter 13

The uncles from America

For the first three months I was in Russia I was the only Y.M.C.A. Secretary attached to the Czechoslovak army. However, before we left Ukraine I was joined by my former colleague in New York, Mr. Atherton, "Mr. A."[73] It was agreed that he would serve with the Second Regiment at Chartorija while I remained with the Third Regiment and supervised the soldiers' club at Polonnoe.

When I had the opportunity to visit Mr. A., I found him settled in the castle of a nobleman which had been commandeered by the regiment for headquarters. Among other luxurious furnishings there was a piano and Mr. A. lost no time in making this the center of his activities. At any time of day or night when they were at leisure those Czechoslovak boys would be found singing the folk songs of the old country. Every Czech and every Slovak knows these songs, some so rollicking, so rhythmic as to cry out for dancers on the village square; others were stern with the spirit of the old Hussite warriors; others marching songs such as *Spějme dál* (Press on) into which the men inevitably burst when they set out on the march. Other songs were charged with the frustration of a subject nation whose lads seemed always to have been leaving their loves for a detested military service. Or they were love songs of depth and poetical beauty combined with a native sensitivity to nature – the woods and meadows of Bohemia, the mountains and lakes of Slovakia, and of course, the rough, tough lyrics of soldiers everywhere. From the agony and sweetness of *Dobrou noc* (Goodnight Beloved) to the comedy of *Šla Nanynka do zelí* (To the Garden Annie Went), the grandeur of the Hussite hymn *Kdož jste Boží Bojovníci* (Warriors of God) to songs praising the land itself like *Teče voda* (The Water Flows) or President Masaryk's favorite hymn *Ach, synku* (My Boy) and the ultimate in national aspiration, the Czech hymn *Kde domov můj* (Oh, Homeland Mine). (During the German occupation the Czechs never sang this song; when liberation came they seemed never to stop singing it.)

Mr. A. knew the music of these songs thoroughly, for he had arranged many of them for part singing. His Czech was good but not good enough to detect above his piano accompaniment the coarseness and ribaldry of the words of many of the verses the boys were singing so lustily. Each verse was more off color than the last one, but Mr. A. played on in happy ignorance. Later some of the men told me of their amusement, watching him, a Y.M.C.A. Secretary under the red triangle, quite

[73] For more information on Charles Atherton, see the biographical essay.

innocently letting them blow off such steam! Perhaps it was good therapy for these men whose lives and whose future was so uncertain. At any rate, they always closed these song-fests with shouts of approval.

As we moved through Kiev on our way out of Ukraine, just ahead of the Germans, John Persitz joined us. This man was always a figure of mystery. Not an American, he came to the "Y" at Moscow as an interpreter. His command of languages was phenomenal. He spoke English fluently, though with a decided accent; he also had French and German; his Russian was perfect, and he could make himself understood both in Serbian and Polish. The Czech language he did not know, but by mixing together his three other Slavic languages, Russian, Polish and Serbian, he was able to get by with a kind of Czech, though the effect was often comical. Persitz was an enthusiast and a man of such striking personality that he soon became a central figure in the army. During the trying days of the evacuation of the army, he was assigned to the Fifth Regiment, and at every stopping place he had the band out playing. He formed parades, and organized impromptu mass meetings at which popular leaders of the army spoke, following which Persitz arranged to have them carried about on the boys' shoulders, escorted by a crowd of cheering soldiers. This method of "keeping up the morale" at least had the merit of causing a diversion and Persitz produced something every time the train stopped.

He seemed to know how to secure action from the railroad personnel. Whenever a troop train stood on a siding too long or a "Y" car was not coupled up at the right position, John would start off muttering, "Something has to be done about this!" Sure enough, soon after he returned the wheels began to turn. No one knew how he did it, but he got action.

I recall one night when the "Y" car was standing in a railroad yard clearly marked "Amerikanskaya Missie" (American Mission). Some would-be travelers tried to board the car and were about to succeed when Persitz jumped out of his bunk, strapped on a Sam Browne belt over his long woolen underwear, put a military cap on his head and rushed to the door shouting, "Nelzya, Nelzya! Amerikanskaya Missie." (No admission here, American Mission.) They took one look at this bizarre figure and dropped off the car. The men laughed at him, but they loved him, and there was wide spread sorrow when he was stricken with typhus and died just as his train reached Vladivostok.

The term "Uncle from America" was first applied to John Persitz and then to each of the "Y" secretaries serving with the Czechoslovak Legion. Its origin is interesting. As noted in the author's Foreword, in Bohemia whenever anyone appeared in new clothes, or built a new house, or in other ways showed signs of sudden and unaccustomed prosperity, he would usually be greeted with the remark, "You must

have an Uncle in America." This derived from the accepted image of the United States as a place of golden generosity.

When, therefore, Americans appeared in the midst of the troops in far off Siberia, distributing freely what seemed to them luxuries, the Czechoslovaks quite naturally dubbed us "The Uncles from America." This name had a humorous but affectionate connotation; I had always prized it above any other honor that has come to me, out of deep gratitude for the quality of human fellowship it expressed.

A program was planned to meet the social and recreational needs of men facing the tedium of the long trek eastward. When fighting began between the Czechoslovaks and the Bolsheviks we changed tactics completely, putting the work on a war time basis. Cheliabinsk became the central office of the Y.M.C.A. as the headquarters of the General Staff was located there.

The first step was a "Y" hut at the railroad station and for this purpose an old building was made available. A decorating crew, composed of invalided Czechoslovak soldiers, and Austrian and Hungarian prisoners of war was commandeered. We were fortunate that these men, steeped in the rich art forms of central Europe, could release beauty in the barren setting of such a building. Evergreen branches from the nearby woods disguised ugly walls; national and regimental flags, pictures, posters – all helped to transform the place. At one end of the room photographs of President Wilson and Professor Masaryk were draped with American and Czech bunting, with the inscription "Together we battle; and together we shall conquer." ("Spolu Bojujeme – Spolu Zvítězíme.") These pictures were actually arranged by a German prisoner of war who took great pride in his handiwork. Our German and Hungarian prisoners seemed content to be with us, though they occupied a somewhat anomalous position, working for an American organization on behalf of Czechoslovak soldiers. Later an orchestra of German prisoners was organized and one day we heard them playing with great spirit a song entitled "When the Yanks get to Berlin, they'll fix old Kaiser Bill." In the beginning we were able to offer only the most meager canteen service, and "movies" of very poor Russian films; it was simply a meeting place for the men. We added theatricals, concerts and lectures to the program, and the rooms were constantly crowded.

The need for better food at the canteen led to the sausage factory and the bakery. "We Czechoslovaks are used to good sausage and know how it should be made. The stuff they have at the Russian market is terrible," some of the soldiers reported to me. Then they made a proposal: "There is plenty of good meat obtainable in the nearby countryside. We can requisition German prisoners-of-war to help make sausage, so why not take over a sausage factory here in town and make our own?"

This was so practical a suggestion that it immediately put us into producing the many types of sausage so dear to the pallets of Czechoslovaks and Europeans generally.

The Legionnaires next rebelled at the sour black bread – the only kind available on the Russian market. Again a delegation came to me, "Why can't we take over a bakery and make our own white bread and the crescent rolls we always have for breakfast at home? There is plenty of white flour around and we know how to bake bread." No sooner said than done; presently thousands of crisp, fragrant rolls were being delivered at six o'clock each morning to my freight-car headquarters in the railroad yard, and a long queue formed to pick up these delicacies.

During the war period there was prohibition in Russia. The only soft drink available was a sour cider called "kvas" made from black bread. This the Czechoslovaks found impossible to drink. As I had discovered a brewery nearby making a prohibition beer with an alcoholic content of only one half percent, I made up my mind to try some of it on the boys from the land of Pilsen and Budweis.[74] It was no Pilsener, but the men certainly preferred it to "kvas."

Later I had a traveling canteen fixed up in a freight car. When I arrived at some lonely outpost in the midst of the mountain forest, I found myself literally mobbed by soldiers who lined up for sausage, white bread, butter and cheese, if this was to be had, and, above all for this "near beer." I confess that as I filled their canteens from a hogshead of this beer, I often thought, "If only John R. Mott could see me now!"[75]

With the increasing hostilities, the base hospital at Cheliabinsk soon harbored nearly 1,000 wounded men. As no Red Cross or other relief agency was on the ground, we had an obvious field for further expansion. A large hall was secured for a club house, benches built, a stage and a motion picture booth erected, another canteen was opened, and our program was trebled. Thereafter every man who could hobble about came each night for the cinema, a concert, lecture, or a play by our own theatrical troupe. Here for some 800 men, many still in bandages and splints, we offered a sort of USO[76] – and our united efforts at amusing them were received with generous approval. For a while at least they forgot their pain! Later our "little

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[74] The cities of Plzeň and České Budějovice, known under their German language names of Pilsen and Budweis, home towns of the world-famous lager beers, Pilsner Urquell and Budweiser Budvar (lately also sold in the United States as "Czechvar").

[75] John R. Mott – the Y.M.C.A. Secretary General at the time. For more information, see the biographical essay.

[76] United Service Organizations – a non-profit, congressionally chartered (in 1941) organization providing morale, welfare and recreation services to the United States military.

theatre" group took to the road and by rigging up a stage in a freight car were able to bring most acceptable entertainment to thousands of men along the railroad.

At first, the Czechoslovak soldiers were obviously puzzled to find the "Y" in Siberia and especially by the red triangle displayed on our buildings and upon our uniforms. Some felt it must be a typical American money-making scheme; others suspected us of political propaganda, while some believed that the red triangle stood for a secret society with ulterior purposes. It never occurred to them that we had come half-way around the world in the simple hope of lifting the boredom and frustration of their lives. The sausage and the rolls, the snack bars and the traveling theatre began to speak louder than any words of mine, though the fact that I could speak to them in their own vernacular made it easier to interpret our mission. I never preached to them. I remembered Masaryk's warning, "Go to them as a friend and do what you can to help; that will be worth more than a hundred sermons."

When a train stopped at a depot on the Trans-Siberian Railway one had to look about the surrounding countryside to find the town. That was true at Cheliabinsk. The town, a medium-sized city, was about two miles distant from the station, the spires of its Orthodox churches standing above the level of the plain. One had to go to town by foot or by "izvoschik" (cab). But as there were about 8,000 troops held up at the railroad yard there, we formed a city of our own and had little need to go into town. We all slept in the freight cars in which we had come, but with an ingenuity born of long experience the men managed to make themselves reasonably comfortable. The field kitchens were also set up in freight cars, the men lined up with their canteens and took their meals back to their own cars.

My own orderly and his staff gave an example of resourcefulness. When it became evident that I was to be stationed at Cheliabinsk for several months, Vymětal managed to have a car commandeered for me and outfitted it for real comfort as to sleeping and meal time. Then he had the car shunted upon a siding which came to a dead end at the depot. As it was not likely that our car would be moved from there, one of my boys managed to tap the electric power on the pole outside and run electric lights into our "Private Car." When they found a stray dog, a near-dachshund, who made himself at home with us, and taught him a repertoire of tricks, our car was still more homelike. One day "Dolfík" played havoc with our car. One of the men had given me a Cossack fur hat ("papacha" they call it). It was a beauty made of pure white rabbit fur. One day when I came into the car it was strewn with white rabbit fur. Dolfík had smelled the rabbit and that was the end of it. We learned how to make good coffee on a Primus stove and soon my car was a favorite rendezvous for afternoon coffee.

During this period I traveled the length of the Trans-Siberian Railway many

times. When I wanted to go to the front with a club car or with supplies I simply left word at the station and my car would be attached to the next train out. It was only a freight car, but it became my private "teplushka." In the sub-zero weather of Siberia travel was a rugged experience. Once my orderly and I set out in a fourth-class car with the thermometer registering 30 degrees below zero. We fired the two pot-bellied stoves until they glowed crimson and then crawled into upper bunks beneath as many blankets as we could muster. During the night the deadly creeping cold penetrated to the very marrow of our bones, waking us up. We would jump from bed, race from one end of the car to the other stoking the stoves from our wood pile and gradually warming ourselves in the process. Vymětal said wryly that "at least hell would be warm." We discovered a most reliable cold index; when the bolts of the freight car showed an icy white rime on the *inside* we could say without fear of contradiction that it was a cold night! Other proverbial signs of Siberian winters were for the most part lacking. Though we often teased newcomers about them, I never "heard the howl of wolves at night" even in the wildest reaches of the steppes.

After the line was opened from Vladivostok into the interior, the Y.M.C.A. sent more men to serve the Czechoslovak soldiers. It was an odd and colorful assortment: a toothbrush salesman from China, a button manufacturer from New York, some veteran Y.M.C.A. secretaries – one of whom had been named by the New York Office as the General Secretary for all the 'Uncles' (a real stickler for reports and conferences), a physical culture specialist, even one who could show the boys how to use a boomerang. Also among the newcomers were some clergymen, including that old friend of the Czechs, Dr. Vincent Písek of the Jan Hus Church in New York.[77]

Dr. Písek had come on a mission of cheer, speaking at rallies held by the various detachments of the Legion. He knew how to encourage the boys and assure them that the Czechs in America were standing back of them. Pastor Písek was a rousing, magnetic speaker and the sight of this benevolent 60-year-old pastor squeezed into a Y.M.C.A. uniform some sizes too small for him made a great appeal to the men. This was reunion for the three bachelors from the Jan Hus Church. Atherton's pleasure in the pastor's presence and his care of him was most touching. One of my colleagues told of visiting the two men in the freight car they were occupying. It was a fiercely hot day, the flies were thick and persistent. Craving an undisturbed siesta, the Pastor sleepily called out to Mr. A, "Charlie, please brush that fly off my

[77] More information on Vincent Písek and the Jan Hus Church available in the biographical essay.

toe." Then after a minute, "Not that toe, Charlie, the other one."

We even became quite accustomed to the trains, even to the hooting in the railroad yard of the whistles of the giant freight locomotives which the Trans-Siberian Railway had somehow acquired from America. The officers had their own second-class cars; the higher echelons and staff officers lived in first-class luxury. Our life together was like that in a miniature city.

I would have stayed in my private car through the winter had not our peace, quiet and order been rudely disturbed. Our car soon came to be known as a place where help and advice might be secured and later on as a place to get good American cigarettes. So we had many visitors. One day a Russian general came in asking for help. As he stood there telling me his troubles, he was suddenly seized with an epileptic fit, and fell to the floor kicking out in all directions. As our stove had but recently been erected, one of its corners rested on a brick. Of course the General had to knock out that brick and down came the stove, stovepipe and accumulated soot that covered the car, beds, dining room table, clothes and the General. When my friend Vymětal came in the next day, "Uncle, I have found that I can get a room for you in one of the buildings at the base hospital, well furnished and comfortable." It did not take long for me to make up my mind to accept this suggestion.

Some of the "Uncles" accompanied the Legion during its entire journey home, sailing from Vladivostok around through the Suez Canal, thence to the Mediterranean port of Trieste and finally overland to Prague. I went home to America with a special mission of Czechoslovak soldiers in the autumn of 1919, but it was not until 1921 that I came to the new Czechoslovakia. It was an indescribable experience to enter golden Prague freed from Habsburg shackles. My wife and I were entertained by President Masaryk[78] and welcomed by old friends, officers in the Legion, but the most heart-lifting encounters were with the men of the rank and file, such as my chance meeting with a Prague policeman. He was directing traffic on Národní třída, one of the main streets of the city, resplendent in shiny helmet and feather cockade. As he saw me crossing the street he dropped his baton, ran over to throw his arms around me, shouting, "Na zdar, strýčku" (Hello, Uncle), "welcome to Prague!"

[78] Materials in the KDM Papers (Box 1, Folder 26) document a luncheon at the presidential retreat at the Lány Chateau where "Mr. and Mrs. Miller" were invited on February 17, 1922.

Chapter 14

Close of the Siberian episode

It would have been a fitting climax to the campaign if the Czechoslovaks had been able to follow their original plan of marching across America and proceeding in triumph to their homeland, for whose freedom they had been fighting.

This, however, was not to be. During the course of the campaign in Siberia circumstances developed which made it necessary to give up the idea of joining the French front and to face a longer stay in Siberia. Curiously enough, it was the reaction of the Russian people in those sections over which the Czechoslovaks had gained control that first detained them. As the Legion swept through eastern Russia and Siberia in the summer of 1918, local anti-communist forces overturned the Soviet governments in each town the Czechoslovaks captured. They were welcomed with relief by the people and hailed as the "Saviours of Russia." The enthusiasm of these Russians in thus being freed from the tyranny of the Bolsheviks was unbounded. The Czechoslovaks were feted and feasted; nothing was too good for them; no words were adequate to sing their praise.

There was even talk of freeing all of Russia from Bolshevik rule. It was proposed to raise an anti-Bolshevik army, and then, by the aid and intervention of the Allies, together with the Czechoslovak forces, they were to march on to Moscow. A new government would be set up, the Eastern front re-established, and Russia once more ranged on the side of the Allies.

The anti-Bolshevik groups abandoned all secrecy and openly began to organize. A provisional Siberian government was established and its green and white flag hung from the public buildings. In Samara a "Committee of the Constitutional Convention," composed of a group of Kerensky's followers, took control. Former officers in the Czar's army came out of hiding and began to build up an army to fight along with the Czechoslovaks. New life and new hope were born in the hearts of those who loved Mother Russia. They had been humiliated by the disgrace of the Brest-Litovsk Peace[79] and horrified by the spectacle of disaster that Red rule had brought to their country.

The Czechoslovaks realized that if they were to retire from Russia at this point it would mean the certain return to power of the Soviet government, followed by a summary and terrible vengeance upon those "Whites" who had revolted under the

[79] Signed on March 3, 1918 in today's Brest, Belarus, between the Central Powers and Bolshevik Russia. It ended Russia's involvement in World War I alongside the Allies.

cover of the Czechoslovak military control. The entire Czechoslovak group refused to run out on these real Russian patriots whose friendship and support had materially aided their own military successes.

The Czechoslovaks knew also that, if they stayed in Russia, they could prevent the return of many German and Austrian prisoners of war to the ranks of the Central Powers. It was then nearing "zero hour" on the western front and replenishments to the Central Powers were to be avoided at all costs. As there were still about 500,000 such potential German, Austrian, and Hungarian soldiers in Siberia, their detention represented a considerable loss to the Central Powers and a corresponding service to the Allied cause.

The final determining factor in their decision to remain in Russia was the word that the Allies had determined to intervene in Russia and were sending troops to reinforce the Czechoslovaks. The Czechoslovaks knew that alone they could not successfully hold such a large territory against the Reds, nor did they place much confidence in the fighting ability of the forces which might be organized by the anti-Bolsheviks. But they were certain that, with the help of a few divisions of well-trained fighting men, they could sweep on to Moscow and put an end to Bolshevik rule, once and for all. Early in the summer of 1918, an English officer came through the lines from Archangel bearing the news that English and American troops had landed at Archangel and Murmansk and would work their way south toward Petrograd. The American Consul General announced the receipt of official advices that the Allies had approved the course taken by the Czechoslovaks and urged their remaining in Russia until Americans and Japanese with some English and French troops could be landed at Vladivostok and come to their assistance. On the strength of such specific promises the Czechoslovaks, with reason, held high hopes that their campaign would eventuate in the ultimate salvation of all of Russia, both from Bolshevik rule and German domination.

When communication was re-established with Vladivostok and thus with the outside world, these promises were validated by the representatives of Allied Powers, and, in addition, there were reports of landings at Vladivostok by Japanese and American troops. Rail connections being effected, French, English, Italian, American, Japanese, and even Chinese officials, appeared in their private cars, all bearing the congratulations and thanks of their governments to the Czechoslovaks and promising moral, financial and military assistance.

Although depleted and weary after three months' continuous service, the Czechoslovaks now concentrated on establishing and holding a front along the Volga River until Allied forces could bring up relief troops and supplies and commence the offensive into Russia. Hoping to effect a junction with Allied forces

in the north of Russia, the Czechoslovaks now pushed ahead on the line of the railroad leading from Yekaterinburg towards Petrograd, and they succeeded in reaching and capturing the city of Perm.

The first tangible result of the opening of the railroad to Vladivostok was the return of the Fifth and Eighth Regiments and the other detachments which had reached Vladivostok before the fighting began. In ignorance of events occurring in the interior, the Czechoslovaks in Vladivostok had taken no action until well over a month after hostilities were under way. Then they seized Vladivostok and began working their way back to the west, meeting some opposition from the Reds en route. They, with the Allied officers attached to their staff, believed that it would take many months to effect a union with their comrades in western Siberia. No one thought it possible that those in the interior commanding only a few men would be able to make progress towards the east. Grave fears were held for their fate and it was expected that the first task of the Japanese and American troops would be to "rescue" the Czechoslovaks in the interior. Vladivostok was amazed when word came that Gajda had broken through and was still more astounded when it was learned that the whole railroad as far as Lake Baikal, with all of the principal cities en route, was in the hands of the Czechoslovaks. Gajda was hailed as a miracle-man and the achievement of the Czechoslovaks with him rated as one of the most dramatic and remarkable feats of the war.

Out in the west every message, every rumor drifting through from the east, was received in an agony of suspense. Word came that the Fifth and Eighth Regiments were on their way back and that Japanese and American troops were following behind. In time the Fifth and Eighth Regiments did arrive, affording much needed reinforcement to the weary troops holding the front. Day after day passed, yet there came no Japanese, no Americans, no English, no French; only more officials in more private cars bearing more promises. The American Red Cross and the Y.M.C.A. came promptly and in sufficient numbers to be of great help. Most wanted and most needed were fighting men and these were not forthcoming. Days passed into weeks and, although it was now known that Japanese and American troops were actually on Siberian soil, none appeared in the west. Finally, one French and one English regiment did arrive and were given a wild welcome by the Czechoslovaks, until it developed that they were men invalided from the western front, men who had been gassed and otherwise incapacitated for active service, sent to the Far East for garrison duty only. As fighting units, they were valueless; they could not even relieve the Czechoslovak troops at the front. It was then that disappointment, disillusion, and even despair fell upon the Czechoslovaks, worn out as they were physically and nervously by the strain of four months' constant active duty. The

frame of mind of the Czechoslovak soldiers is revealed by this story. A soldier wounded in the leg was limping around the grounds of the base hospital. A comrade called to him: "Honem Pepíku, kulháš jako spojenec!" (Hurry up, Joe. You limp along like an Ally!" A considerable force of Russians was actually in the field, but experience had proved how little they could be relied upon. Meanwhile the Bolsheviks had organized their army on a more effective basis and under the directing genius of Trotsky, that motley mob of Austrian, Magyar, and German prisoners of war and lawless Russian adventurers had been whipped into an organized army, well equipped and officered. Already they were beginning to press the tired Czechoslovaks. The important city of Kazan had to be abandoned because the Czechoslovaks had not sufficient strength to hold it. The Volga front was over 1,000 versts in length and it was plain that 40,000 fatigued soldiers would not be able to cover it, much less make advances into Russia, confronted as they were now by an army of a half million men.

The situation was further complicated by new developments on the political front. The Russians who had first headed up the anti-Bolshevik political organizations (formed under the protection of the Czechoslovaks) belonged, for the most part, to the Social Revolutionary party. They were "Leftists," anti-Bolsheviks and anti-communists, pledged to the recovering of the constitutional convention and the formation of a constitutional democratic government. They were Socialists of the Kerensky type, not communists, and were sincere and devoted patriots.

Soon anti-Bolshevists of another type came upon the scene; these were men who had been so steeped in the atmosphere of special privilege in the Czarist regime that they could not imagine Russia without a Czar. Their influence began to be felt both in the new army and in the new Provisional government. Some of these men were undoubtedly sincerely convinced that Russia needed the iron hand of autocratic dictatorship and that the people were not ready for self-governance. Others, evidently, were only seeking an opportunity to return to the positions of power and perquisite which they had enjoyed under the old regime. Some men made a great deal of their love of Russia, but the Russia that they loved was the Russia where a few lived high and well at the expense of the many, and where the common people were to be regarded as beasts rather than human beings.

The Czechoslovaks watched with anxiety the rising power of these members of the ancient regime. They had seen Russia under the old system and had no desire to witness a return to that order of things, much less to give to such a trend the support and protection of their arms. They detested Bolshevism but they abhorred Czarism still more. They remembered how the officers used to treat the common soldiers under the Czar. They had seen signs in the parks reading "Admittance to dogs and

common soldiers forbidden." They knew that peasants and common soldiers had been segregated on the street cars and railway stations. They did not wish to see any second-class citizenry return to the Russian scene.

Unfortunately, it was men typical of the old regime who succeeded in gaining the ear of the Allied representatives. By their skill in diplomacy, they convinced the Allies that the Social Revolutionaries were a dangerous element to have in charge of the new government, and that political affairs would be much safer and much more successful if placed in charge of men who were trained in the old ideologies and knew how to rule the Russian people with an iron hand.

The best known and most able of these men was Admiral Kolchak[80] of the Russian Navy. He was a man of splendid reputation, high character, and sincere devotion to his country, but withal a militarist and autocrat, true to the standards of a Czarist court. Admiral Kolchak succeeded in persuading the envoys of the British and French governments that Russia needed a dictatorship, and that he was the logical man for the post. Accordingly, without consulting the Czechoslovak authorities, a *coup d'etat* was effected at Omsk, whereby the members of the former government were put under arrest and a dictatorship declared.[81] The Czechoslovaks, astounded at this turn of events, threatened to withdraw their troops from the front but, just at this juncture, there arrived in Siberia as the official representative of the newly-founded Czechoslovak government, General Milan Štefánik. Great as was the joy which prevailed over welcoming a representative of their own new government, a government whose establishment had been made possible largely by their heroic efforts, the predominating feeling among the men was a desire that General Štefánik do something immediately to extricate them from a situation which was rapidly becoming intolerable. General Štefánik had to follow the lead of the Allies for the full status of the Czechoslovak Republic remained yet to be determined by the powers who sat at the Peace Conference. Štefánik and other Czechoslovak leaders were more than once reminded that "the boundaries of the Czechoslovak Republic have not yet been determined upon, and much depends upon the way the Czechoslovak army in Russia performs the duties laid down by the Allies." With such a club held over their heads, the Czechoslovaks were obliged to cooperate as completely as possible.

General Štefánik did succeed in arranging for the withdrawal of the Czechoslovaks from the active front, the newly organized anti-Bolshevik forces taking their places. Thus the Czechoslovaks were afforded a much needed rest and an opportunity to

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[80] Aleksandr V. Kolchak (1874-1920).

[81] November 17-18, 1918.

complete their military organization which had been necessarily imperfect and disrupted during active campaigning. The disappearance of the Czechoslovaks from the scene was disastrous for the anti-Bolshevik cause for the new Russian army once more under the old iron discipline had little stomach for fighting their countrymen. Furthermore, the effect of the old regime tactics adopted by Kolchak was to disappoint the people in his own territory, causing regret that the Bolsheviks had ever been overthrown, since their last state seemed worse than the first had been. I stood and watched one day when new recruits for the anti-Bolshevik army were being dispatched to a training camp. When the men did not move fast enough the officer in charge took out his Cossack whip and beat them across their shoulders. I said to the Czech friend who was with me, "That is the best way I know to make communists out of people. What fools!"

The Czechoslovak army was now scattered along the Siberian Railroad from Omsk to Irkutsk, their duty being to keep the railroad functioning, so that Kolchak's army would not be cut off from its base of supply in the east. Beyond Irkutsk the road was to be guarded by the Japanese and American troops. An American Railway Commission of trained engineers headed by Colonel Stevens[82] had been in Siberia for some time for the ostensible purpose of helping the Russians run their railroads. Until now, they had been cooling their heels, waiting for political events to permit some accomplishment. This Commission was now enlarged into an Inter-Allied Commission and to it was assigned the task of operating the Trans-Siberian Railway.

For a time all went well but, by the spring of 1919, the restiveness of the people under Kolchak's autocratic rule began to be expressed in acts of violence and especially in attempts to interrupt railroad service. Armed bands began to ambush trains out on the steppes and to fire upon them; the tracks were torn up and trains were wrecked with increasing frequency. As most of these outbreaks occurred in the section guarded by the Czechoslovaks, it became their duty to disband them, and this proved a difficult task. All that spring and summer the men were in hectic pursuit of bandits across the steppes and in constant guerilla warfare with them. Among the Czechoslovaks there was a growing distaste for this business. Also the men were naturally anxious to return to the homes which they had left four to six long years before. Furthermore, they felt that they had done their full duty by Russia. Much dissatisfaction and discontent was felt and began to be expressed over remaining in Russia simply to support the policies of the Allies who had completely

[82] The United States government established the Russian Railway Service Corps in 1917 and Colonel John E. Stevens supervised its work until its dissolution in 1922.

frustrated the Czechoslovak program in Russia. Staff and officers were put to it simply to hold the men in line; the morale of these soldiers, so superb under the heaviest trials, was beginning to sag.

However, they remained at their posts even when the Russian army front broke wide open, and the Bolsheviks came rushing back into Siberia. They saw the loss of the ground which they had gained at so much sacrifice due to Kolchak's policy of reaction, a policy plainly supported by the Allied governments. Gradually as the Bolshevik forces pushed eastward, it was decided at long last that the Czechoslovak Legionnaires had done enough fighting in Russia in an attempt to pull Allied chestnuts out of the fire, and the evacuation was begun. As far as the Russian situation was concerned, it was a sad and bitter termination to months of fighting and sacrifice imposed by the Allied governments on the theory that a de facto alliance existed between Germany and the Soviet government. With the World War now over, the battle between Kolchak and the Bolsheviks could only be thought of as civil war. The Czechoslovaks had no interest in taking sides in purely internal strife, and certainly they had no desire to give further aid to Kolchak since the Russian public was plainly showing that after a taste of his neo-Czarism they preferred Bolshevik rule.

Finally in the winter of 1919-20 the transportation of the Legion toward the homeland began. Most of the troops shipped from Vladivostok by boat through the Suez Canal to Trieste and thence to Prague. This trip around the world was a happy finale to the extraordinary series of adventures these men had experienced. Some regiments were transported by rail through Canada and a few detachments of invalided soldiers crossed the United States en route to Europe.

In January 1920, fifteen months after the establishment of the Czechoslovak Republic, the first transport of Legionnaires arrived in Prague, to be welcomed by the populace with the wild enthusiasm accorded to conquering heroes. Not until the spring of 1921, however, did the last transports reach Czechoslovakia. Seven years had passed since some of those boys had been conscripted to fight for Franz Josef on the Austrian front and three years had gone by since their primary objective of the freeing of the nation had been achieved.

In the fall of 1918, when the news reached us in Siberia that Czechoslovakia was free, we could scarcely believe it. Even the signing of the armistice,[83] which was welcomed with such unrestrained rejoicing in other countries, made little impression upon us for there was no armistice in Siberia and there seemed to be no immediate prospect of an end to hostilities or of a return to a life of peace at home.

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[83] November 11, 1918 (Armistice with Germany ended World War I).

The months which followed dragged out interminably. By the time the men actually took ship at Vladivostok to begin the long journey to their liberated homeland, patience was nearly exhausted and nerves frayed almost to the breaking point.

They could forget this, however, when they reached home – home in a free and independent country where people rejoiced in the new liberty which they had made possible. In the history of the Czechoslovak people these Legionnaires will always have a place of highest honor, equal in glory to that of the Hussite warriors of olden times. Many of their countrymen have been reminded of the ancient legend of the knights of Blaník, who in the olden days had fought their oppressors.[84]

[84] The legend dates from the time of King Václav IV (1361-1419, ruled 1378-1419, son of Charles IV, known from the popular song as Good King Wenceslas), most enlightened of the Czech rulers of the 15th century. It recounts how the Blaník Knights, fabled defenders of the oppressed, retired to a cave in Blaník Mountain in full armor to await the right moment to charge out and overwhelm all oppressors of the weak. (*Note by KDM*)

Chapter 15

Masaryk comes home

It is time now to gather together the strands of history in the making of Czechoslovakia, the formation of a new and sovereign state accomplished in the midst of a world engaged in four years of bitter war.

The great progenitors, Masaryk, Beneš, Štefánik, laid the intellectual, political and military foundation for Czechoslovak independence. No insignificant part was played by Czechs and Slovaks in America who were unceasing in expressing their loyalty. The saga of the Czechoslovak Legion battling in Russia and Siberia had been revealed in dramatic color that brave fighting for a noble cause is part of the character and tradition of the Czechoslovak people, and that such deeds speak more effectively than the most eloquently spoken words. Nor must it be forgotten that the Czechoslovak Legion in France and its counterpart in Italy, while smaller numerically and less dramatic in their operations, were nevertheless equally brave and equally effective in their service to the cause of Czechoslovak freedom. Those left in the homeland, seemingly shackled and gagged, had paralleled in the most skillful secrecy the various efforts of their countrymen abroad.

By 1918 it was clearly time that all these efforts should be synchronized boldly and unitedly, for the evidence of disintegration in Austria-Hungary accumulated with each passing week and the end of that ancient empire of rapacious tyranny was in sight. One by one the Allied powers, Britain, France, the United States, formally recognized the Czechoslovak National Council as the *de facto* government of Czechoslovakia. Meanwhile the revolutionary leaders in Bohemia were pressing the hard facts of national collapse upon the moribund Vienna government, together with the growing certainty of the birth of an independent state.

During the summer of 1918, the leaders at home had formed a National Committee representing all political parties, which was solidly united in the plan for complete political independence. The National Committee was in a strategic position to take quick advantage of the political situation caused by the military failure of the Central Powers and the obvious denouement in Austria-Hungary.

On October 2nd, the Czech deputies in the Austrian parliament made open defiance of Austria when their Representative Staněk[85] spoke as follows, "You did

[85] František Staněk (1867-1936) – politician representing the interests of farmers of southern Bohemia and western Moravia, deputy in the Vienna Parliament 1901-1918, after 1918 held various prominent positions in the Czechoslovak government.

not admit us to the conference to discuss the terms of peace which Austria would offer. But now against your will, you will have at the peace negotiations a Czechoslovak representative of our Legions … Now you will have to negotiate with them and not with us. The Czechoslovak question will be decided elsewhere than in Austria. The deciding factors of this question are not here but abroad."

On October 18th, Emperor Karl[86] issued a manifesto promising autonomy to the various nationalities living in the Empire. It came too late. On the same day Masaryk made his Declaration of Independence at Washington, and President Wilson served notice in his reply to the Austrian peace overtures that Austria must now deal directly with the Czechoslovak people themselves. On the following day the National Committee issued a proclamation at Prague in which the following significant statements were included, "The Czechoslovak question is no longer one of internal reform within Austria-Hungary. It has become an international question and will be settled together with all the other great world questions at the peace conference. This question also cannot be settled without the consent and understanding of that part of the nation beyond the borders which has received international recognition."

The stage was now set for the final act – the complete capitulation of Austria-Hungary and the birth of an independent Czechoslovak state. The Czechoslovak leaders at home, anxiously following the developments of each day, finally saw the end of Austria in Andrassy's[87] note practically accepting the terms of President Wilson, and on the following day, October 28th, the Czechoslovak revolution was accomplished and the nation declared free and independent. The revolution took place without bloodshed and even without serious disorder. The National Committee, having the ground well prepared, simply took over the entire organization of the state – communications, transportation, finance, administration.

The Austrian authorities saw with bitterness the futility of resistance. The army on which they had always depended was gone. They had nowhere to turn. Silently, without struggle, the vast organism that had been the Empire of Austria-Hungary collapsed. Suddenly the streets of Prague were decked in the Czech colors and soon were packed with milling multitudes, cheering and singing in frenzied joy. The war was over, victory won, and the long night of oppression which had endured for three hundred years was at an end.

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[86] Karl I of Austria (1887-1922) – the last Emperor of Austria, King of Bohemia and Hungary (reigned 1916-1918).

[87] Count Julius Andrassy (1860-1929) – foreign minister (Secretary of State) of Austria-Hungary.

On October 28th the National Committee gave words to the fruition of the longed for fight for independence:

Your long cherished dream has become a reality. The Czechoslovak State has today been established on an equal footing with the other nations of Europe. The National Committee, clothed with the confidence of the whole Czechoslovak people, has taken over the government of your state as the only authorized and responsible factor.

The Czechoslovak people will hence forward act in every respect as a free member of the great family of independent nations. A new page in the history of our people has been turned.

You will not disappoint the confidence placed in you by the whole world which is celebrating the splendid deeds of our people culminating in the immortal bravery of our gallant armies on the western front, in Italy and in Siberia. The entire world is watching you entry into a new life and you must therefore be true to the high standard set by our Army. We must show ourselves disciplined as a nation, remembering that as citizens of a new state we have duties and obligations as well as rights.

At the outset of this new era in our history, the National Committee, henceforward your government, desires that your behavior and your joy should be in keeping with the dignity of the events that are now transpiring. Our liberators, Masaryk and Wilson, must not be disappointed in their confidence that they won freedom for a people who are capable of governing themselves. No act of violence must disturb the glory of these days; no act must be committed which will disgrace our revolution. The property of our neighbors must be respected. The rights of person and property must be kept inviolate. Comply only with orders issued by us.

Word of these events transpiring at Prague did not reach Masaryk in America until the 9th of November. In the meantime, he and those about him were perplexed at receiving no word from the people at home. The newspapers carried a few items concerning unrest in Prague, but nothing of any significance. On October 28th, Masaryk had even cabled to Beneš at Paris, "Try to send some reports to those at home."

Finally, however, on the morning of November 9th when he arrived at his Washington headquarters, Masaryk found two cablegrams on his desk. The first was from Geneva dated November 4th; the second from Paris dated November 5th. The Geneva cablegram was signed by the most prominent leaders among the Czechoslovaks and read as follows, "After four years of indescribable suffering we stand on Swiss soil and send you our most sincere greetings and the most cordial thanks of a grateful nation."

The second cablegram, from Beneš explained the situation more fully. It read, "After a conference with Kramář and his friends in Geneva we have come to the

following decisions. The government will be republican. The cabinet will be completed immediately after our return home. As President, you should return immediately. Meanwhile give to Kramář the right to sign for you as President of the Ministry. The general political and social conditions at home are such that your presence is necessary. Your authority is limitless and all expect you. All of our activities are approved with general enthusiasm. I am keeping the portfolio of Minister of Foreign Affairs and am remaining in Paris. Štefánik remains as Minister of War."

The National Committee, representing the revolutionary movement at home, had at last made connection with the National Council, the organ of the movement abroad, and henceforth there was to be a unified leadership in a unified nation. Masaryk's reply indicated how pleased he was that apparently all political parties had agreed upon a common program and that the nation as a whole stood solidly behind him and his associates in the work which had been done on their behalf abroad. He cabled as follows, "Both cablegrams from Switzerland received. I am deeply moved by the unity of the representatives of all parties. A grateful nation is a rare and beautiful thing. I feel a great sense of responsibility. I am coming as soon as possible."

On November 14, 1918, the Czechoslovak National Assembly met at Prague. Dr. Kramář, the Prime Minister, in his opening address, declared that all ties which bound the Czechoslovak nation to the Habsburg dynasty were broken, that the Czechoslovak state was henceforth a Republic, and that Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk was its first President. Unanimously and with great enthusiasm all of these declarations were accepted by the Assembly, and the delegates immediately set to work upon the tasks ahead: the building of a new nation, the creation of a new government and drawing up a constitution with solid legal base, under which the new nation could function in democratic freedom.

A few days later a demonstration occurred in the Old Town Square when the so-called "Marianská socha" was pulled down. This was a statue of the Virgin Mary and the fact that it was pulled down did not indicate a wave of anti-Catholic feeling. This particular statue had been erected by the conquering Habsburgs to commemorate their victory over the Czechs at the Battle of the White Mountain in 1620 and it was regarded more as a symbol of Czech defeat than as a religious emblem. Similarly, most of the emblems of the Austrian dynasty, the double-headed eagles over the official buildings, the "K.K." which denoted "Kaiserlich koeniglich" (imperial and royal) disappeared very rapidly.

When Kramář and his associates returned from Switzerland early in November, there was another demonstration, especially when Kramář, standing in an

automobile in front of the railroad station, declared that it had been determined in the conference with Beneš that the form of government of the new state would be republican. The meeting of the first National Assembly on November 14th was the occasion for another demonstration.

But the real "slavnost" (celebration) was reserved for the arrival of the President of the new Republic, Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk. His return was delayed long enough to enable his enthusiastic people to organize a festival befitting the greatness of the occasion. As the days went by and communication with the outside world became easier, the real significance and grandeur of the task accomplished by Masaryk and his associates in exile was made clearer to the people, so long isolated by censorship. When December 21st came, and Masaryk arrived, the populace was prepared for an ovation which would go down in the pages of history.

In the Declaration of Independence issued by President Masaryk on October 18th in Washington there had been set forth the general principles to guide the Czechoslovak people in the process of forming their constitution. Complete freedom of conscience, religion and science, literature and art, speech and press were to be guaranteed, together with the right of free assembly and petition. There was to be universal suffrage; women were to be placed on an equal footing with men politically, socially and culturally. The rights of racial minorities were to be safeguarded by proportional representation. The government would be parliamentary in form and would recognize the principles of initiative and referendum. It was a difficult task to which the National Assembly set itself, but it was made much lighter by the unanimity of feeling among the people as to the general principles on which the new nation should rest and by the honest determination to demonstrate universally the capability of the Czechoslovak people for self-government.

So Tomáš G. Masaryk set forth for the new Republic. He arrived in England, no longer unknown professor espousing a hopeless cause but as President of an exciting new nation. Greeted with military honors, received and entertained by the leading statesmen of Great Britain; this was a far different reception from that of four years earlier when he had been hard put even to get a hearing or to secure news space for his story. His faithful friends and fellow-workers, Steed and Seton-Watson, were on hand to greet him.

After London, on to Paris. There were long conferences with Beneš to discuss the momentous events of their two years of separation. There were audiences with the leading statesmen of France, Poincare, Briand, Clemenceau, Pichon[88] and others

[88] Raymond Poincare (1860-1934) – President 1913-1920.

who had been quick to realize the righteousness of the Czechoslovak cause and to give it their hearty support. There were visits to the French Legion. There were preliminary conferences concerning the terms of the peace treaty, the paramount issues of those days. Then on to Italy where Masaryk was the guest of the King and with him reviewed the Italian Legion. And, finally he started the last lap of the journey home.

It was on Friday, December 20th, when Masaryk crossed the border and after four years of absence stood again on his native soil. Let the man himself describe his feelings that were his that day:

On December 20th, Friday, we stopped at the border of Bohemia. More than one tear was shed by those who were returning home after years of absence. Our Czech soil received its kisses. The first greetings were of local official (by his accent originally a German) and then my family and the official welcoming committee. We spent the night at České Budějovice (Budweis). Friday is for me a fateful day. I do not know whether other people have such days, but in my experience the most important and joyous events of my life are apt to occur on a Friday. It was on a Friday that I left Austria back in 1914. Wilson's reply to the Austrian note and our declaration of independence were issued on a Friday. And now on a Friday I stood again on Czech soil.

On Saturday, December 21st, we arrived at Prague. What were my feelings as I experienced that wonderful reception? Was I pleased that I was being rejoiced over? Looking at all the festivity, the rich buntings, costumes, flags, decorations, roses and other flowers; replying to all the kind greetings, I could not put from my mind the difficult tasks which now awaited me in the building of our new state. I was still enchained by such thoughts when, in the afternoon at the Assembly, I took the oath of office as President, promising 'on my honor and conscience to seek the welfare of the Republic and obey its laws.' After visiting my wife in the sanitarium (Mme. Masaryk was suffering from a nervous breakdown as a result of her war experience), I went for the first time to the Castle to sleep – or rather not to sleep.[89]

The people of Prague gave way completely to their emotions during that fall of 1918. The gradual disintegration of the system which had kept a strange hold on them for three hundred years, the final victory of the Allies after four years of doubt and despair; the bold declarations of their National Committee: these events set the stage for a great demonstration of joy, relief and thanksgiving with the people

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Aristide Briand (1862-1932) – Prime Minister 1915-1917.

Georges Clemenceau (1841-1929) – Prime Minister 1917-1929.

Stephen Pichon (1857-1933) – Foreign Minister 1917-1920.

[89] T.G. Masaryk - *Světová revoluce*, 1925, p. 445.

milling up and down the streets, shouting in glad excitement.

It was indeed a unique event. Here was a man who four years before had gone forth as a simple professor, honored and respected, but vested with no office, no title, no authority save that of the conscience of his people as he knew them. His victories were in the field of statecraft and he had gained them in distant lands while cut off from the people at home. Now he was returning from exile as the head of a new nation to be welcomed by his people as their people, their liberator.

The daily press lost no opportunity to stir the imaginations and emotions of the people. A few extracts from the Czech newspapers of that time reveal the intensity of feeling which gripped even the news editors:

The Czechoslovak nation awaits its first president as it has never awaited anyone before. Recall all the glorious entries into Prague that had been made in the course of history and one will not find any more glorious than this. It will be a celebration of democratic simplicity, but unforgettable to those who live through it. Hundreds of thousands of our people are to look upon a man who came forth from the people, worked for the people and now has brought great joy to the people. Such a moment cannot and will not be forgotten.

One thing you must not forget! You fathers and mothers, tell your children what this event means. Tell them that from the time of the Hussite king, George of Poděbrady, until today no Czech has stood at the head of the Czech state. Tell them of the generations that suffered persecution, living in bondage but always holding firmly the faith that eventually the day of liberation would come. And tell them that upon them, upon their work, their honor, their courage and their discipline will depend the happiness and development of the Republic. (*Národní listy*, December 21st, 1918)

Another newspaper reporter gave this eye-witness account of this homecoming day:

Home at Last!

Truly triumphal was the entrance of our President upon the soil of the country which he had freed. On his journey through Europe, Dr. Masaryk traveled as the governing head of the Czechoslovak Republic, and as such was accorded all of the honors which are in keeping with the prestige of that office. But still greater is the outward demonstration and inner enthusiasm with which he is welcomed by the Czech people.

For the first official welcome of the President there journeyed to the border station, Dr. Zahradník, the Minister of Railways; Jan Masaryk, the son of the President, members of the National Assembly representing all political parties and scores of other officials.

Shortly after one o'clock amid great excitement the President's train, decorated with garlands and flags, pulled into the station. The members of the National Assembly formed

in line. A guard of honor, composed of members of the Sokol, took their places. There were regular soldiers and a military band, playing the Czech National Anthem. (…) A moment after the train stopped the passengers began to emerge, and among the first was President Masaryk himself, not a bit changed in appearance, alert and quiet, apparently not fatigued by his long journey. He was wearing a fur coat and on his head a soft hat, such as he had always worn. With his well known smile, he extended his hand to the delegate standing nearest to him. After the President came his daughter, Olga, and there was an affecting family scene as Jan Masaryk embraced his father and sister. The other members of the Presidential party meanwhile alighted from the train and gathered around the President. There were representatives of the French, Italian and English governments, as well as Czechoslovak officials and officers. Then followed formal addresses of welcome, not only to the President, but to the foreign representatives, to which each made a brief reply. Thereafter, the President's train was greeted at each station by cheering multitudes, and especial celebration being held at České Budějovice (Budweis) where the party spent the night. But it was at the capital city, Prague, the historic center of Czech national life, that the nation gathered to do fitting honor to its new President.

Another local paper carried the following description of this epoch-making event under the date, December 22nd, 1918:

Prague never saw such decorations as were in evidence yesterday. Not only the houses and buildings on the main streets, but those on tiny obscure alleys and courts were covered with flags, bunting and garlands. There was scarcely a house which did not have at least one flag; hardly a window which did not display pictures of Masaryk and Wilson. In addition, there were placards, pictures and representations of the National Coat of Arms, and flags of all the Allied nations. (…) By eleven o'clock, the streets along the route of the parade were lined with solid banks of humanity. Every window, every balcony and every roof was thick with people. These were no passive onlookers, but eager participants in the celebration. As the hour of the President's arrival approached, the excitement became intense. On the lips of everyone were the questions, 'Is the train near Prague? How late is it?'

Suddenly, a cannon boomed – then a second one and immediately all the bells of Prague were ringing out their welcome.

At the Wilson railroad station (formerly Franz Josef Station), the first formal reception was held. (…) The train shed was elaborately decorated, the platform covered with rugs. A guard of honor composed of Legionnaires from Italy and members of the Sokol were drawn up. Meanwhile the ministers of the new government, the personal friends and the members of 'Mafia' gathered in the waiting room.

As the train came out of the tunnel, Dr. Alice Masaryk went out upon the platform. (…) The door of the President's car flew open and Jan Masaryk lifted Alice up into her father's arms. This most touching reunion took place on the platform of the car. (…) There were more kisses than words. While the band played the National Anthem, the President

descended from the train and stood at attention until this and the national airs of the Allied nations had been played. Then followed by his suite, he entered the waiting room where the Ministers of the new government with Dr. Kramář at the head, awaited him. After the formal address of welcome by Dr. Kramář and a brief response by the President, these two men, the one the leader of the revolt abroad, the other the leader of the revolution at home, embraced each other without a word. Tears were seen on every face. Not only the ladies present, but members of the Government and hardened soldiers were affected by this meeting. It was an historic moment, heroic and sacred.

After other welcoming speeches and responses, the President and his suite proceeded to the adjoining room where his personal friends and the members of 'Mafia' were gathered. Of all of the faithful followers of Masaryk, these were the most faithful. Improbable as it may seem, it is nonetheless true, that some of these 'traitors' learned for the first time yesterday of the 'treasonable' activity of their companions. This shows how well the 'Mafia' was organized, and how well its members kept their own counsel. In the album which was spread out on the table, over forty signatures were placed. There were men active in political affairs who had risked their lives and property, friends willing to suffer exile and death, former soldiers who had in their time betrayed Austrian military secrets, discovered formulas for poison gas or plans for mobilization and the disposition of troops and munitions. Among them was an engineer, formerly employed in an Austrian munitions factory, an artist who had concealed important papers in his paintings, a clergyman, a lackey who had been employed at the court of Vienna, writers, lawyers, and policemen. (…) In introducing them to the President, it was said, 'all of these men have either been in jail or have deserved to be.'

In the main waiting room of the station were gathered authors, artists and scholars. All of Czechoslovak culture was represented here. A singing society was on hand with a new chorale composed for the occasion … Amid great excitement the notable gathering awaited the President's arrival -- and when he finally came down the steps accompanied by Dr. Kramář, a great wave of enthusiasm swept over the multitude. A mighty welcome arose from hundreds of throats. Hats were aloft waving a welcome, and handkerchiefs, often lowered to wipe away the tears. For what man or woman from among those creators of national culture could fail to be moved when they met face to face with the man who was bringing to them from abroad that fundamental prerequisite, political freedom? After the chorale was sung the President was welcomed by Master Alois Jirásek, the dean of Czech writers, whose novels based on Czech history had done much to further the revolutionary movement. (…)

The President then left the railroad station and was again given a tremendous ovation by the crowds assembled outside. Masaryk refused to ride in the imperial coach of Josef II, which had been prepared for him, and entered an automobile which, followed by a long procession of others, slowly made its way through wildly cheering multitudes. The parade traversed all the main streets of the city, concluding at the Parliament Building where the President took the oath of office. (Národní listy, December 22nd, 1918)

Many times on that triumphal day Masaryk had said in effect, "I cannot say much now, I am touched. I am grateful. But above all I am conscious of the fact that the greatest task lies ahead of us."

The following day he delivered his first message to the National Assembly.

In 1918 it was said, "This day must never be forgotten." But in 1948 there came into power in Czechoslovakia a regime which set as its goal to make the people forget that day and the man who was then so honored. One by one monuments to Masaryk all over the country were being torn down by the communists. His name and all that he stood for had to be erased form the country's history books. Letters bearing the stamp by the United States honoring Masaryk as "Champion of Liberty" were not accepted by the postal authorities. Thus the Communist regime had launched a systematic campaign to destroy "the Masaryk legend."

But the more desperately the Communist government tried to take Masaryk's halo from him the more vividly his figure stood out in the memory of his people. They remember how Masaryk enjoined them to "Be honest and tell the truth" so they found it impossible to swallow the anti-Masaryk propaganda.

If for no other reason, the description of Masaryk's homecoming given here should be read by the people of his land today for the inspiration of the common people and for the shame of those who would sully the reputation of one of the nation's greatest men.

Chapter 16

Twenty years of the Republic

William L. Shirer has described the Masaryk republic of Czechoslovakia as "the most democratic, progressive, enlightened and prosperous state in central Europe."[90]

It was my good fortune to visit the new Czechoslovakia three time during this period; once for a year (1921-22) and subsequently twice for shorter visits. It was impossible not to be impressed with the dynamic energy of the citizens now engaged in making a national life within the framework of freedom. There were great physical improvements: new buildings, factories, apartment houses, private dwellings, government housing projects, new roads, new industries, and, especially in Slovakia, new schools. There was also a new army no longer serving an Austria sullenly and grudgingly, but with eagerness preparing to protect this free land of their own. It was even more thrilling to sense the new spirit abroad in the land. It was as if the people now realized what freedom meant: the right to think, to speak, to write, to vote and to worship as they wished. They had been cut loose from the tethers which had kept them so long earth-bound. They seemed to feel that now they could sing with the angels.

It was good to be an American in Prague during these days. The people remembered with gratitude our personal and national commitment to the cause of Czechoslovak freedom. Even strangers recognizing us as from the United States smiled a hearty welcome. The name of Woodrow Wilson was universally revered. In many a peasant cottage the portrait of America's war-time President could be seen side by side with that of their President-Liberator, Masaryk. Every city had its "Wilson Square" or "Wilson Avenue." In Prague there was a statue of Wilson in a park near the Wilson train station; there was also a "Hoover Street" in remembrance of the American Relief program.[91] Such place names were to be changed time and time again in later years, but in the years following World War I America certainly was tops.

That was a time too when it was good to be an "Uncle from America." The Legionnaires were home from Siberia; I met them everywhere and found many of them well placed in the government. Going to the Customs House to locate a suit

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[90] Shirer, William Lawrence – "The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich: a history of Nazi Germany," Simon and Schuster, New York, 1960, p. 358

[91] Herbert Hoover (1874-1964) – director of the American Relief Administration in Europe 1918-1919, elected 31st President of the United States in 1928 (President 1929-1932).

of clothes long overdue from Scotland I met delay and the usual red tape until a friend from the Russian Legion recognized me; that suit was then delivered in no time flat! Even to cash an American Express check in a Prague bank was a "procedure." You sat, number in hand, and waited with what patience you could summon until your number came up; banking still followed the Austrian pattern, very formal, very tedious. Once a Legionnaire spotted me and, saluting, quickly passed the cash through the wicket. It was the same in restaurants; you entered as a stranger but catching the eye of an ex-Legionnaire waiter the "Uncle" was served with affectionate speed.

I had been charged by a church group in the United States to make a study of religious conditions in Europe with special reference to the new churches that had come into being in Czechoslovakia. This took me on a wide circuit throughout the country and whenever possible I arranged for a special meeting of the local branch of the Legion. Such gatherings in towns and villages gave us opportunities to recall the experiences we had together in Russia and Siberia and to discuss our hopes for their future in the land they had helped to liberate. I found that an old friend was the head of the Commission for Land Reform. Over the coffee cups one evening he outlined for me the plans he was working on for land reform. The large estates which under Austria were largely in the hands of the German and Hungarian nobility, the Church or large corporations were to be drastically reduced in size thus making large areas available for peasant farms. The Ministry of Social Welfare which dealt with the problems of labor, questions of hours, wages, pensions, insurance and housing included many Legionnaires among their employees. From them I could learn first hand how the new republic was putting Masaryk's ideas into effect.

In the early spring of 1922 my wife and I were invited to lunch at the country "White House" at Lány. This was to be her first meeting with the President and during the short rail trip out from Prague she asked me to brief her as to the President's personal characteristics. I think I used the phrase "not precisely hail fellow well met." How mistaken I was in giving such an image of the man!

As we approached the beautiful estate provided so that the President might have a retreat from the formality and inconveniences of the Castle in Prague, the snow lay thick upon the ground and the air was damp and chill. Inside we found the house all warmth and welcome. There was just one touch of national pride – two young soldiers stood on guard at the door with the new flag of the Republic mounted between. In the President's guard of honor a French or an Italian or a Russian Legionnaire was always represented, each in the distinctive uniform of his war-time unit.

We were welcomed by Dr. Alice who was her father's official hostess and we waited for the President in the drawing room with other guests. In a few minutes the President entered through a door at the corner, quietly, without being announced. He was a tall man with graying hair, dignified and grave of countenance, but by no means austere. With outstretched hands he approached my slightly nervous wife, giving her welcome with words as simple as "We have waited so long to see you." It was an international gathering and the conversation was mostly bilingual – French and English; little Czech out of deference to the non-Slavic guests. My wife was seated at the President's right and she has never forgotten Masaryk's courtesy and concern for her grasp of the flow of ideas around the table. He stopped to clarify in English when the French conversation became too rapid. Here was simplicity, sincerity, greatness!

It was difficult for foreign diplomats to accustom themselves to the democratic regime instituted in Prague after the establishment of the Republic, for all their service and training had been in the formality and ceremony of other capitols. Masaryk threw no barriers of ceremony about himself, and visitors to his apartment in Hradčany Castle or at the more personalized country estate at Lány found him accessible and easy in his personal relations. It was a shock to many foreign visitors in Prague in the early days after the war to see the boxes at the opera occupied by men and women in street clothes. The Czechs were not used to class cleavage along social lines, and had been slow to assume the sophistications which Europeans expect from government officials.

This lack of drawing-room polish accounts for the derogatory remarks about Czechoslovak culture, which one heard sometimes from foreign visitors. Many of the Czech high officials were about as indifferent to the niceties of diplomatic social usages as was Abraham Lincoln in his day. Just as certain circles in Washington were shocked by an uncultured rail-splitter, so the modern sycophants to be found in all embassies were offended by the "easy-as-an-old-shoe" manner of Masaryk, Beneš and other peasant sons who were high in government circles.

A visitor to Czechoslovakia could not fail to note the new emphasis being placed upon sports and recreation. There was a time when a Czech's chief diversion was to seat himself behind a large schooner of beer in a smoky coffee-house or tavern. Even the Sokols carried on their work in stuffy gymnasiums. Now the trend was towards the outdoors, and strenuous hiking had become a favorite leisure-time activity. Scores of excursion trains were run out of Prague on Sundays and holidays to handle the crowds of eager mountain climbers, while skiing in winter and swimming in summer became very popular. Summer camps for children and young people were opened throughout the length and breadth of the country.

The Sokol organization had been an important part of life among the Czechs and Slovaks since the reawakening of their national consciousness. It now became doubly significant as a force for health and national loyalty. With 750,000 members, adults, children and youth of both sexes, all dedicated to the development of sound and graceful bodies, it fostered individual friendship united now in a healthy national pride. Every six years the Sokols held a great festival and a demonstration in Prague, called the "Sokolsky Slet" (literally, "The Flocking of the Falcons"). The tenth Sokol festival was held in the summer of 1938 with over 80,000 participants. The climax of the festival was the mass exercise given by the men and women gymnasts. 30,000 men and 17,000 women went through their rhythmic calisthenics in the great Masaryk Stadium to the wild applause of 200,000 spectators. But the Sokol organization signified much more than this. By inspiring in its members a moral strength and a patriotic spirit it became one of the greatest assets of the Republic. The spirit generated by the Sokols had activated the fight for freedom at home and abroad. This same spirit was to fortify the new nation in the heavy crises to come.

Following the war-time program carried on with the Czechoslovak Legions in Russia and Siberia and in France and Italy as well, the American Young Men's Christian Association initiated a peace-time service in Czechoslovakia. The Y.M.C.A. had a dozen or so commodious buildings in strategic centers throughout the Republic with activities similar to those in the United States, with an especially far-reaching program among students at Prague, Brno and Bratislava. At the invitation of Dr. Alice Masaryk the Young Women's Christian Association of America sent a team of social workers to make a survey of the city welfare services in Prague as a starting point for a national program of social work. The financing of the buildings and programs of these American organizations came partly from Czech sources and partly from America, the directing leadership at first being furnished entirely from America. It was not long, however, before both direction and support of this work became entirely autonomous. The American personnel made itself dispensable as quickly as possible and the institutions accommodated themselves fully to Czechoslovak life. The "YMKA" (pronounced IMKA) and "YWKA" (pronounced IFKA) were recognized as Czechoslovak institutions. Dr. Alice Masaryk was President of the Czechoslovak Red Cross from the beginning of the Republic. This was a semi-official organization and became an instrument of great educational importance; its first-aid stations and children's health centers being of tremendous value.

The cultural life of the Czechs and Slovaks bloomed anew in the equable climate of political freedom. Naturally a musical people, the Czechoslovaks received musical

training in school from the elementary grades on. Consequently, singing societies, bands and symphony orchestras were to be found in many towns and smaller cities, while in all the large cities philharmonic societies and string quartets became world famous. Opera houses presented the works of Smetana, Dvořák, Janáček and Martinů,[92] as well as those of the Italian, German and French composers. Theatres were subsidized by the government and every effort was made to place the best music and drama within the reach of all the people, admission to a concert or to the opera or the theatre being often as low as twenty-five cents.

The government encouraged creative activity in literature and art, and, as a result, the already deep cultural life of the nation was greatly enriched. Of the modern writers, Karel Čapek achieved an international reputation, but there were many others whose work stands on a high level of literary excellence. František Langer and Josef Kopta had written about the Czechoslovak Legionnaires and gained considerable recognition abroad. Of the outstanding artists, mention should be made of Max Švabinský, the portrait painter, František Šimon whose etchings of Prague are so charming and now so nostalgic, Adolf Kašpar, [93] the well known illustrator, and Myslbek, the renowned sculptor whose masterpiece is the monument of Saint Wenceslas at the Wenceslas Square in Prague.

Many of us, long familiar with the religious situation among the Czechs and Slovaks, expected that with the birth of political freedom would come a certain

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[92] Bohuslav Martinů (1890-1959) – since 1923 lived in Paris, in 1941 fled to the United States and the years after World War II were spent in Switzerland.

[93] Karel Čapek (1890-1938) – novelist, playwright and translator, had close ties to T.G. Masaryk whom he extensively interviewed and the interviews were subsequently published. His play R.U.R. uses the word "robot" for the first time.

František Langer (1888-1965) – medical doctor serving in the Austrian army before joining the Legion in Russia, continued his medical practice in the army also after his return to Czechoslovakia while becoming a famous writer and playwright.

Josef Kopta (1894-1962) – veteran of the Legion in Russia, wrote poetry and prose, journalist.

Max Švabinský (1873-1962) – painter and engraver, among other works author of Czechoslovak currency bills and postal stamps, also stained glass windows for St. Vitus Cathedral in Prague.

František Šimon (1877-1942) – in addition to his etchings of Prague produced views of many world cities based on his travels in the Europe, United States, Morocco, India and Japan.

Adolf Kašpar (1877-1934) – renowned for his illustrations of classical works of Czech literature and his bibliophile prints.

exodus from the Roman Catholic Church. This proved to be the case, especially among the Czechs as I discovered in the process of making a religious survey of the changes that were taking place in church relations of the people.

The movement away from the Roman Catholic Church took place in two directions. First there was established a new national Church called the Czechoslovak Church. The distinctive marks of this new body were the use of the vernacular in the church services; the administration of the communion in both kinds in the Hussite tradition, and the abolition of the pledge of celibacy by the priesthood. The new Czechoslovak Church mushroomed in fantastic growth. Within two years there were 292 places of worship under its jurisdiction and by 1935 this Church could claim about 900,000 adherents. After much wavering as to its theological basis, the Czechoslovak Church became associated with the Unitarian-Universalist body and is therefore to be listed among the liberal Protestant bodies.

Second, the Evangelical Church of the Czech Brethren had brought together the Reformed and Lutheran groups in Bohemia and Moravia with a total membership of 160,000. By 1935 the membership had doubled, and this led to the founding of many new congregations, and the training of new clergymen. It was exciting to observe the vitality injected into the Church by these new accretions. When I had been in the country before World War I, the Protestant Churches seemed almost moribund. Now there was a fire in the heart, and intensity in prayer, a broader outlook upon the world and upon the social mission of the churches in that world.[94] This movement had little effect upon conditions in Slovakia where both the Roman Catholic and Lutheran church and the Hungarian Reformed church retained the *status quo*.

Altogether the statistics of 1930 showed the number of Protestants, including the Czechoslovak Church, to be 1,923,200 as compared with 10,831,700 Roman Catholics. The Roman Catholic Church had lost one sixth of its membership in the twelve years of the Republic, but was still influential.

Most of my church visitation during this time was made to the congregations of the Czech Brethren and Czechoslovak Churches, but I had some opportunity to study the Hungarian Reformed Churches both in Hungary and in Yugoslavia and

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[94] According to the Czech Census of 2001, the Czechoslovak Church had 99,000 adherents and the Evangelical Church of the Czech Brethren could claim about the same number. The Roman Catholic Church counts ca. 2,740,000 among its faithful in the Czech Republic today (with the total population of 10,230,000 as opposed to 15,600,000 for the Czech and Slovak Republics still united in Czechoslovakia in 1991).

Czechoslovakia. Here I met a dilemma which was to plague the Republic throughout its existence. Although the question of the Sudeten Germans would prove to be the gravest problem the government must face, the inclusion of large numbers of Magyars within the southern border of Slovakia was to resolve in the most bitter resentment. Some 700,000 Magyars were now under Czechoslovak jurisdiction, a large proportion of them living in the section known as "Žitný Ostrov" (Rye Island). This fertile area was arbitrarily included within Czechoslovak boundaries, the new southern border at this point following the course of the Danube River.

The Reformed Church of Hungary was strong in this area and when I met with clergy there, they were most outspoken in their objection to being included in Czechoslovakia. "Please tell the church leaders in the United States that the greatest service they can render to us is use their influence to have this section restored to Hungary. When a bird is cast out of its nest it is not enough to nurse it and feed it; the only real service is to restore it to its nest." It is easy to understand how these men felt about such uprooting. This was indeed one of the tragedies of the Treaty of Trianon. Hungary had suffered a greater loss of territory through the peace treaties than any other country. In one of Budapest's parks a great flower garden was so laid out as to form a map of Hungary showing its "lost territories." Below the map were the words, "Nem, nem, soha." (Never, never, never) (*will we be reconciled to the loss of these lands*).

Subsequently in reporting to President Masaryk, I stated that though this slice of territory might be an asset to the Republic because of the resulting control of the Danube, it would be a greater liability because of the irreconcilable hostility of the Magyar population to Czechoslovak rule. Meanwhile the Magyars claimed all of Slovakia as rightfully theirs, without a shadow of justification. In considering this problem one cannot ever forget Hungary's historic record of ruthless magyarization of her Slavic minorities.

This one experience sufficed to make it evident that the equalizing of minority rights within the new republic would present almost insuperable problems. To be sure, no country in Europe was without a national minority, but Czechoslovakia as constituted by the peace treaties, had over three million Germans, 700,000 Magyars, and 100,000 Poles within its borders. Then, too, although the Slovaks were not considered a minority by the government at Prague and still less so by the Slovaks themselves, there was from the outset some tension between the two groups. The Slovaks saw to maintain their language, religion and national customs and the Czechs constantly endeavored to give the Slovaks the largest possible measure of autonomy within the framework of a unified republic. These two positions were

not always easily reconciled.

The leaders of the country, especially Masaryk and Beneš, were determined to work out the minority problem of the country by democratic rather than by repressive measures. No discrimination or prejudice against the minorities was tolerated by either of them. Upon one occasion when some Czech students made an anti-German demonstration in front of the German Theatre in Prague, President Masaryk announced that by way of personal protest he would boycott the Czech theatre for twelve months. A birthday gift of a million crowns given to President Masaryk by his friends was donated by him for the erection of a dormitory for German students at the University. Masaryk had been for years a bitter opponent of the policies and programs of the German Reich and the Austrian Empire, especially as they affected the Slavs, but he maintained genuine admiration for the German people and a deep appreciation of their cultural achievements.

Instances of anti-German, anti-Magyar or anti-Polish feeling were kept to a minimum, although some bureaucracy and tactlessness by minor officials were inevitable. Basically, however, the reason why the Germans and Magyars resented the dominance of the Czechs and Slovaks in the new government was that they had been accustomed to occupy the dominant places themselves and resented being called upon in any way to be subservient to "the uncultured Czechoslovaks." But as the years went by the Germans gradually reached a state of relative harmony with the Czechs and no serious political problems would have arisen if the existence of minorities in Czechoslovakia had not been used in the international game of power politics.

The united support given by the vast majority of Czechs and Slovaks to the government of the Republic was due largely to the ability of Thomas G. Masaryk and Edvard Beneš to command the respect and loyalty of all factions. The Czechoslovaks readily took to a democratic form of government despite three hundred years of history within a monarchy. None of them were far removed from the democratizing influence of the soil, the former Czech nobility had been largely exterminated during the Thirty Years' War, and the aristocracy which had risen to take its place was more German and Magyar than Czech. There were not even any sharply drawn class lines in the general population.

Masaryk served as President for two years before the new constitution was adopted in 1920. Thereafter he served two full seven-year terms until 1934. He began a third term but ill health and his advanced age forced him to resign in December 1935. He had led his country for seventeen years. As was logical, Edvard Beneš was elected to succeed him and so became the second president of the Republic.

Masaryk's death in September 1937 filled the heart of every Czechoslovak and

every lover of liberty the world over with deep sorrow at the passing of this great champion of freedom and democracy. The state funeral held at Prague was participated in by vast multitudes of people drawn from all over the Republic and attended by the diplomatic representatives of every country in the world. Once again, as upon the occasion of the Liberator's welcome home, the Czechoslovak people gave free reign to their emotions; only now their joy was turned into sorrow. But with all their sense of loss at the passing of one who was "the Father of his Country," as truly as was Washington, the predominating sentiment of the nation was that expressed by Dr. Beneš in his funeral oration, "Though he passes, Masaryk is still amongst us; and his presence summons us to create a State which shall be among the nations what Masaryk was amongst us, and what Masaryk was to the rest of the world. This call means that we must remain faithful to Masaryk. In bidding him farewell in your name I promise that we shall obey that call. President-Liberator, we will remain faithful to the heritage you have laid in our hands."

In Edvard Beneš, the Republic had another leader to whom such a heritage could be safely entrusted. Faithful and effective collaborator with Masaryk in the creation of the State, he had stood at his right hand unfailingly through the formative years. Cabinets came and went, but always Edvard Beneš was chosen as Minister of Foreign Affairs, and now that the question of the relations of the Republic with the other nations of Europe was looming up as the critical question of the hour, the nation was glad that at the helm was one who had piloted the country through the storms of post-war Europe.

October 28, 1938 marked the twentieth anniversary of the founding of the Czechoslovak Republic. Elaborate preparations had been made for the celebration. The Czechs and Slovaks felt that they had a record of achievement of which they could be rightfully proud. They had established a stable, smoothly functioning government. They had effected greatly needed reforms without repression, violence or revolution. Their people had prospered; they reveled in their new-found freedom. They had given to the minority groups within the country a freedom not to be found in any other country in Europe. They had played a conspicuous part in the effort to secure wider cooperation among of the nations of Europe. They were determined that their unsolved problems, especially that of minorities, could be and would be settled by the democratic processes of negotiation between reasonable men.

But 1938 will be remembered by the Czechoslovaks not as the anniversary of a new freedom, but as the date of a new national tragedy and the end of many of the dreams, aspirations and accomplishments of the preceding twenty years. For three hundred years the Czechs had kept vividly before them the date "1620" when, at the

Battle of the White Mountain, they lost their political independence. It seemed likely that 1938 would be an equally tragic date in the history of the nation.

Chapter 17

Freedom lost

I visited the Czechoslovak Republic of Masaryk and Beneš in 1936. One sensed even then mounting tension over the problem of the Sudeten Germans.

However, it was not until the "Anschluss" and the rape of Austria in March 1938 that matters became critical. Friends kept writing, "We are afraid it will be our turn next." During that fateful year Czechoslovakia seemed always in the spotlight. So closely could we in America follow the day by day events in the daily newspapers or over the radio that in imagination, heightened by the terror of succeeding reports, we were living with the Czechoslovak people, with them praying and hoping for the best, but fearful of the worst.

We who knew the background of these fast moving and tragic events were in a somewhat better position than most to understand what was transpiring and why. The foreign policy of the Prague government had followed consistently the general principles worked out by Masaryk and Beneš during their diplomatic campaign on behalf of Czechoslovak independence. These two leaders were students of history and of the philosophy of history. They interpreted World War I as a life and death struggle between two opposing ideologies. Later Masaryk wrote, "This was a world war, not merely a conflict between France and Germany, nor a battle between the Germans and the Slavs; these and all other issues involved were but a part of a great battle for freedom and democracy, a struggle between theoretical absolutism and humanitarian democracy."[95] The war had settled the issue in favor of democracy, Masaryk believed, and in 1925 he wrote that he could see evidences of the beginning of "a free federation of states in Europe taking the place of the absolute control of Europe by one Power or Alliance of Powers." Masaryk and Beneš were never interested in a foreign policy merely for the sake of preserving the interest of Czechoslovakia. There were larger issues at stake; the re-organization of the life of Europe so that the various national groups could function as an economic unit within a political structure free of the fear of war and of the necessity of being constantly prepared for it. Masaryk did not hesitate to call democracy "the political form of the humanitarianism which is the essence of the teaching of Jesus," and his favorite method of pointing the issue confronting Europe was to say, "Jesus, not Caesar – that is the meaning of our history and the meaning of democracy."[96]

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[95] T.G. Masaryk – "Světová revoluce" (1925) p. 500.

[96] Ibid. p. 608.

Czechoslovakia had taken the idea of the League of Nations very seriously. Their participation in it was no measure of expediency designed to keep the country in the good graces of France and England. It grew rather out of the deep conviction that some such instrumentality was needed to produce the united Europe by which alone their country could hope to live in peace and prosperity. Edvard Beneš became one of the leading figures in the councils of the League, at one time serving as President of the Assembly. The foreign ministers of other European states, as they came and went, began to rely much upon the judgment and political astuteness of this Foreign Minister from Czechoslovakia who seemed to hold a permanent portfolio for Peace.

Needless to say, the hopes of Masaryk and Beneš as to the definitive character of the victory of democracy in the World War and the early emergence of a united Europe were not justified by the actual trend of affairs. In fact, looking back across Munich and Godesberg and Berchtesgaden those hopes now seem hopelessly naïve. Nevertheless, the ideal that only through democratic cooperation of free nations may permanent peace be assured for Europe was sincerely and steadfastly adhered to in free Czechoslovakia.

However, Masaryk and Beneš had received hard training in the pragmatic philosophy and consequently shared a realistic point of view of the swift and dramatic events which took place in Europe. They dealt with each situation as it arose to the best of their wisdom, sure that, though immediate solutions of particular problems might seem to retard the democratic ideal, eventually the mighty truth would prevail.

To outline the background of the Czechoslovakian crisis of 1938 would require a review of the course of events in Europe during the preceding years. The League of Nations was showing its impotency when faced by repeated flaunting of the code of international morals. The seizure of Abyssinia by Italy and of Manchuria by Japan; the outbreak of civil war in Spain with Italy and Germany aligned on one side and Russia on the other; the undeclared Sino-Japanese conflict; the reoccupation of the Rhineland by Germany and her determination to re-arm; the seizure of Austria by Germany – all of these events so implicit with world danger took place either in defiance of the League or in contravention of its professed principles of international relations. Mussolini[97] and Hitler became the strong men of Europe, sneering at the very word democracy. Surely then even Beneš, the optimist, must have seen that for European democracy and his own democratic state in particular, black days were ahead.

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[97] Benito Mussolini (1883-1945) – Italian Fascist leader, became Prime Minister in 1922, gradually assuming all power as dictator.

During the life of the Weimar Republic[98] the Czechs had maintained an easy friendliness with the Reich. Indeed, with the signing of the Locarno Pact,[99] the Czechoslovak leaders felt that a valid basis for future cooperation between the two countries had been found. All this was changed with the accession to power of Adolf Hitler and his National Socialist Party in 1933. It soon became apparent that Hitler was interested not only in the restoration of the power and prestige of the Reich, but also in extending its power to the East. The old "Drang nach Osten" was revived. Once again the Germans were dreaming of a "Berlin to Baghdad" sphere of influence. Hitler expressed openly his ambition to control the granary of Ukraine. There were similar granaries on the plains of Hungary and Romania. These were the treasures that Hitler really coveted for the Reich. And each step taken toward the East had this objective in mind, however loudly Berlin might protest that it was actuated only by the desire to liberate German nationals from foreign repression and to give them an opportunity to develop their life in accordance with Nazi principles.

The seizure of Austria was the first step in this direction taken swiftly, dramatically, before the other Powers realized what was happening. The next step was to be taken in Czechoslovakia, as Hitler publicly intimated, ostensibly for the purpose of "liberating" the Sudeten Germans but really in order to gain control of the Danube and easy access thereby into the wheat and oil fields lying beyond. The very existence of Czechoslovakia was a sharp irritant to Hitler and his menials; even the thought that a Slavic people was fit to govern itself was deemed preposterous. And besides, the Czechoslovak government was democratic; its leaders professed idealistic and humanitarian principles which were abhorrent to the Nazis.

Moreover, the new Republic had established an alliance with Germany's ancient enemy, France. It even had a working agreement with Russia, which was anathema to Hitler. It tolerated the Jews, according them equal rights with other citizens; and, to cap everything, these despised Czechoslovaks had the effrontery to exercise governing power over three million Germans. Therefore, away with Czechoslovakia!

Hitler was a shrewd politician and he managed his anti-Czechoslovak campaign rather astutely. His method was to "bore from within." Before the Nazis came into power, the German minority was fast becoming reconciled to life within the

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[98] Constitution created in Weimar (by the German National Assembly which had fled there from the street riots in Berlin) defined the form of government in Germany for the years 1919-1933.

[99] A series of agreements negotiated in the Swiss town of Locarno in October 1925 by European governments, aimed at establishing stable and secure territorial borders in Europe and mutual peaceful cooperation.

Czechoslovak Republic. They had their own representatives in the Parliament at Prague; they even had representation in the Cabinet. Their children were taught in German schools by German teachers. In towns where the Germans were in the majority, municipal affairs were wholly in their hands. To be sure, economic conditions in the industrial towns of the Sudeten region had been distressing, but the Germans were beginning to realize that their economic salvation could best be worked out in cooperation with the Prague government and that no sudden prosperity could be expected within the German Reich.

When the Nazis moved in, they found a ready mouth-piece in one Konrad Henlein, a gymnastic instructor.[100] Taking advantage of Czechoslovakia's liberal policy in regard to freedom of speech and press, he and his followers began to foment trouble. All sorts of grievances were voiced; some of them real, most exaggerated, some purely imaginary. Impossible demands were made upon the government at Prague, requesting that it abandon its alliances with France and with Russia. It was to recognize the Nazi party as an autonomous unit within the Republic free to spread its pan-German, anti-Semitic, anti-democratic, anti-humanitarian doctrines at will; free also to take its orders from Berlin. Henlein's party insisted also on the need for adjustment of the rights and privileges of the German population, even a reordering of the form of the state in the direction of a decentralization of governmental functions and the granting of a larger measure of autonomy for national groups. This the Prague government was willing to do. It could not, however, submit to domination from Berlin on matters of internal and foreign policy without sacrificing its independence and democratic principles.

Consequently, when there was evidence in May 1938 that Hitler was preparing to march into Czechoslovakia, the Republic quietly moved its troops to the border, ostensibly to maintain order during the municipal elections taking place at that time, but in reality to serve notice upon Herr Hitler and upon the world that Czechoslovakia was determined to defend her national sovereignty. By that show of determination, they called Hitler's "bluff," for he was not anxious for war at that time. The Fuehrer was irritated beyond expression at this frustration of his plans, and much of his subsequent bitterness towards the Czechoslovaks and towards President Beneš in particular was due to the fact that he had been foiled in his plans to repeat by an easy move into Czechoslovakia in May 1938, what he had accomplished in Austria the previous March.

During the summer of 1938, events moved into high speed. Hitler was becoming

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[100] Konrad Henlein (1898-1945) – leader of the Sudeten German Home Front (Sudetendeutsche Heimatfront).

more indignant with each passing week of Czechoslovakia's independence. Henlein was making new demands upon Prague every few days and, as the government moved to meet them, the ex-gymnastic instructor would run across the border to consult with the ex-paper hanger and come back with new demands of a more extreme nature. Meanwhile, Germany was intensifying her military preparations, both on the Czechoslovak and the French frontiers. France was torn with internal dissentions, due to financial and labor troubles. Despite feverous preparations for an eventual war, England was not yet ready for it, physically or psychologically. The people knew that another world war would be brought to their island by the advance in aviation techniques and they recoiled from the prospect. Week by week in the capitals of Europe, especially in London, Paris and Geneva, the atmosphere became increasingly charged with nervous tension. Only in Berlin and Prague was relative calm. In Berlin the people were calm because they knew nothing of what was transpiring save that there was a determination on the part of the Fuehrer to stop these beastly Czechoslovaks from persecuting the Germans in the Sudetenland, and they trusted their leaders to take the necessary measures.

By contrast, in Prague, twenty minutes by plane from the German border, the people were acutely aware of the impending danger and of the terrible prospect they faced if war eventuated. But all observers commented on the resolute calmness of the Czechoslovaks through those weeks. They were calm, first of all, because they had faith in their army. It was a small army, but well equipped and trained, with a leadership drawn from the Czechoslovak Legion headed by the one-eyed General Syrový. Their fortifications along the border were of the best. Military experts have estimated that the Czechoslovak army could have kept twenty-two German divisions very much occupied for several months. The Czechoslovaks were calm because they had faith in their allies. They were sure that German aggression would bring France to their rescue immediately and they were reassured on that point more than once during the summer. Then the Czechoslovaks were calm because they believed their cause to be just. They were willing to make almost any concession to the Sudeten Germans, provided that the nature of the concessions be determined by negotiation and carried out by a democratic process consonant with the rights of all concerned and the maximum amount of freedom. They were confident that an adherence to that policy on their part would appeal to the conscience of the entire world as just, fair and honorable and that even Hitler could be won over to negotiation and peaceful compromise. They were certain that such a course would but cement the friendship of the western democracies, and make it morally imperative that they stand by in case Hitler should attack.

The beginning of disillusionment dates from the arrival in Prague in August 1938

of Lord Runciman[101] and his mission. The Prague government could not do otherwise than to accept the British suggestion that such a mission be sent and to accord to Lord Runciman and his associates their fullest cooperation. However, it was a scarcely concealed secret that the Czechoslovak leaders, Beneš, Krofta, and Jan Masaryk,[102] had been increasingly distrustful of British foreign policy since the resignation of Anthony Eden[103] and the subsequent attempts of Britain to curry favor with Berlin and Rome. William L. Shirer[104] was in Prague the day that Runciman arrived. After attending his press conference that night, he wrote in his diary, "Runciman's whole mission smells." Shirer realized that the Czechoslovaks knew perfectly well that Runciman was being sent by Chamberlain[105] to pave the way for handing over the Sudetenland to Hitler, and he called it "a shabby diplomatic trick."

Lord Runciman and his entourage arrived in Prague with many trunks filled with dress clothes and a full supply of aristocratic hauteur. Not finding much use for either at the Castle when talking with Beneš, the peasant's son, nor yet in their more numerous conferences with Henlein, the ex-gymnastic teacher, the mission felt obliged to spend much time at the castles of the German nobility and at the estates of the capitalists in Sudeten territory. The nature of Lord Runciman's report which Chamberlain later acknowledged to be the determining factor in his thought and action at Berchtesgaden, clearly shows that, unconsciously perhaps but nonetheless truly, Runciman's point of view was that of the German nobility. His fundamental conclusion that the Czechoslovaks and Germans could no longer live together peaceably in one state is based on the German assumption of their own superiority and Czechoslovak inferiority, the characteristic point of view of the German upper classes.

Throughout his stay in Czechoslovakia, Runciman repeatedly advised President Beneš to do everything possible to conciliate Henlein and his followers, and repeated

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[101] Walter Runciman, 1st Viscount Runciman of Doxford (1870-1949) – prominent politician of the Liberal Party, served multiple terms in the Parliament.

[102] Kamil Krofta (1876-1945) – historian, diplomat, Minister of Foreign Affairs 1936-1938.
Jan Masaryk (1886-1948) – the younger son of T.G. Masaryk, diplomat, served as Ambassador to Great Britain 1925-1938, Minister of Foreign Affairs 1945-1948.

[103] Anthony Eden (1897-1977) – Foreign Secretary 1935-1938 and 1940-1945, Prime Minister 1955-1957.

[104] William L. Shirer – "The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich," pp. 376, 377); William Lawrence Shirer (1904-1993) – American journalist and historian, famous for his reporting from Nazi Germany.

[105] Neville Chamberlain (1869-1940) – Prime Minister 1937-1940.

concessions were thereupon made upon the strength of British assurances that only thus could an invasion by Hitler be avoided. If through those weeks the Czechs and Slovaks had known that Runciman was to recommend the dismemberment of their country, a firmer policy with Henlein would have been adopted, many of the disorders on the border so aggravating to Hitler would have been prevented, and the Czechoslovaks would have realized that they must work out their own salvation without help from Britain and France.

As one looks back on the weeks preceding the fateful conferences between Hitler and Chamberlain, one cannot escape the impression that Czechoslovakia was being used as a pawn in the hands of men playing for large stakes who would never hesitate to sacrifice the pawn if the opponent could be check-mated, and the game drawn out or won. Yet all the while the players on this game were making a pretense of being primarily interested in the welfare of the pawn!

The dismemberment of their country was bitter gall for the Czechoslovaks. But even more tragically cruel was the method by which the horror was committed. Czechoslovakia had stood staunchly for negotiation, arbitration, and settlement by mutual concessions after ample discussion. Furthermore, the dismemberment was effected by the method of ultimatum accompanied by a threat of force, a method employed not only by Germany but by the nations who were supposedly leading exponents of the democratic settlement of disputes. The Czechoslovaks could understand a Hitler who shouted "Give us Sudetenland by October 1st or else –." That was consistent with Germany's policy and with the Fuehrer's method of dealing with opponents. Hitler fuming with rage at Berchtesgaden and heaping insults upon Beneš in his tirades at Nuremburg and Berlin – that was not the most galling memory of these fateful days. Far more bitter was the spectacle of the representatives of Britain and France confronting President Beneš at three o'clock in the morning of September 19th, 1938 with an ultimatum calling for the cession of Sudetenland immediately or else –. The Czechoslovaks had thought that in the last war the democracies had fought to put an end to autocratic determination of the fate of peoples by those who happened to posses the power. But could there be a clear example of the same autocratic method than the conference at Munich where representatives of four great powers sat about a table partitioning the territory of a sovereign state without even giving that state an opportunity to plead its cause? The last resort of a liberty-loving people is the privilege of defending its existence. The Czechoslovaks were ready to fight for their freedom, alone if need be. They did not want war, but they felt that if they were to lose their freedom in any case, they might at least show how dear it was to them by the intensity of their struggle to preserve it. Even this privilege, the privilege of fighting and dying for their country in honor,

was denied them; for as matters finally evolved, to have resisted the invasion of Hitler would have made them immediately chargeable with responsibility for plunging the whole of Europe into war.

Those of us who shared the agony of the Czechoslovaks at a distance, hanging upon every word that came to us by press and radio, and interpreting the reports by our knowledge of the country and its people, knew that we journeyed with friends along a veritable "via dolorosa."

Some impressions of those fateful days remain indelibly on one's memory and throw some light on the character of these Czechs. The attitude of the Czech people was the subject of repeated comments by correspondents. Before Berchtesgaden they were calm, resolute, apparently unafraid. After Berchtesgaden there was bitterness and hopeless rage and a sense of cruel injustice. With the mobilization of the army this mood changed and there was eagerness, enthusiasm; after all they were to be permitted to make a fight for it. Then Munich – and the gloom of utter despair, followed by complete apathy as to future developments. With the Sudeten territories ceded under such terms, what was the use of fussing over the exact territory to be handed over? Germany could now have her way by force in any event. Better make the best terms possible and have an end to it all.

The dignified self-control of Beneš and his associates were impressive. Hitler in his public speeches expressed himself about President Beneš and the Czechoslovaks in unbelievably course and insulting terminology. Beneš felt that he and his country had been betrayed by the French and the British. And yet all of his public pronouncements were made without rancor, without vituperation, without self-justification and without an attack on anyone. They were simple straight-forward appeals to the reason and conscience of the world, and won countless friends among those who made a quick comparison of the tone and content of the addresses of Beneš and those of Hitler, and decided then and there that the little fellow was the greater man.

In contrast, the short-wave broadcasts from Berlin by government propagandists must have made many friends for Czechoslovakia among those outside the Reich who listened in. One evening, the broadcaster spoke of "the Czech mass murderers, making the Sudetenland run with the blood of their German victims." But a few hours before, an American correspondent who had just returned from the Sudeten territory reported that all was quiet there and any reports of riots or bloodshed were sheer fabrication. A German broadcaster referred to "the communist General Syrový taking his orders from Moscow," quite innocent apparently of the fact that Syrový had been the commander-in-chief of the Czechoslovak Legion in its campaign against the Bolsheviks. We heard Hitler in his Berlin speech say that the

thousands upon thousands of Sudeten Germans who had fled before Czechoslovak outrages across the border into Germany, when everyone knew that those Germans were fleeing before the prospect of a war which would make of their home towns a no-man's land.

There was tragic irony in the story of Hitler, Mussolini, Chamberlain and Daladier[106] solemnly drawing a map showing the parts of Czechoslovakia to be ceded to Germany while one lonely Czechoslovak representative hung about in the corridor, being called in once of twice for information only. Mussolini was the only one of the conferees who spoke all the languages represented at Munich. No one needed to speak Czech.

The broadcast by Jan Masaryk from London on the anniversary of his father's death was a masterpiece – a moving, passionate and yet reasoned appeal for the moral support of Americans. His closing words spoken in his own tongue to his Czechoslovak compatriots disclosed his realization of the anguish through which they were passing and, out of his own anxiety, he sought to strengthen their morale: "We are not afraid and we will not give in," he said.

Reports from the Hungarian border in October 1938 indicated that Czechoslovak officers were having difficulty restraining their men from offering immediate battle to the Magyars, and this was understandable. They had seen a large part of their country turned over to Germany without a fight; and then another section yielded to Poland without resistance – and now came the Magyars with absolutely unreasonable demands. "Do we have to give all of Slovakia back to Hungarian oppression without a blow being struck for freedom?" That is how they reasoned among themselves, these soldiers of the Republic. We could readily understand that.

Yet one after another came fresh concessions to the Germans, to the Poles, to the Magyars; then the separation of Slovakia and the annexation of sub-Carpathian Ruthenia to Hungary. Now nothing remained but the rump of a country and the hope that they could, themselves, hold fast to those ancient cultural and political ideas of independence for protection against the inevitable and crude barbarities of Nazi rule. The so-called "Second Republic" under the Presidency of Hácha[107] was short-lived. On March 15, 1939, Hitler, abandoning all pretense of being interested solely in the German minorities, set up the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia and an "Independent" Slovakia under German protection. Now the swastika waved

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[106] Edouard Daladier (1884-1970) – French Prime Minister 1938-1940.

[107] Emil Hácha (1872-1946) – post-Munich President of Czechoslovakia in 1938-1939 and the Czech lands after March 15, 1939 until May 1945.

over the Hradčany; Masaryk Square was rechristened "Adolf Hitler Platz," and the "Avenue of the 28th of October" was renamed "The Avenue of the 15th of March." Meantime a constant manhunt was on for the most open supporters of Masaryk and Beneš, for Communists, Czech refugees from the Sudeten areas and for Jews. These were summarily arrested and hustled off to concentration camps. One basic item of security remained to the once free citizens of Czechoslovakia. Not even Hitler with all his Storm Troopers could arrest an entire nation, indissolubly united in love of freedom and democracy. No jail could accommodate them.

Anyone with the least knowledge of the traditions of the Czechoslovak army could understand the sober yet enthusiastic response of the soldiers to mobilization order that day in September 1938. After weeks of constrained and watchful waiting they received the order to go to the front and be ready to defend their country. How sturdily and with what terrible gaiety they responded, going off as if to a national festival instead of to war. So it had been in Siberia when the Legionnaires were allowed finally to march against the Bolsheviks without waiting for further insults and aggravations. Conversely, the helpless rage of soldiers when later ordered to retreat after ceding fortifications and territory to the Germans without a fight, can be readily understood by anyone who had served with a Czechoslovak fighting unit. There is a story of one Czechoslovak lieutenant who, after laying in a supply of ammunition, led ten of his men to a small hut resolved to defend it and to die honorably when the Germans marched in. One can understand that too.

Some veterans of the campaigns in Russia, France and Italy, made a symbolic gesture which reflects the reaction of all Czechoslovak patriots to the Munich conference. They had been decorated by the British and French governments for services rendered in the World War. They now returned their D.S.O. medals[108] to the King of England and their Legion of Honor medals to the President of France. With each went a letter stating that as these orders awarded in recognition of service in the name of democracy and freedom, they were now returning them since they could no longer wear them with honor.

"Peace in our time was assured at Munich," proudly claimed Neville Chamberlain. A high price has been paid for that brief and bitter peace – most of it by the Czechoslovak people. They paid in territory, in wealth, in population; they paid in disillusionment and denigration of spirit; they paid in national pride; they paid in sacrificing great leaders; they paid in military fortifications and economic security; by losing confidence in the given word of nations. But they had not paid in national honor nor in self-respect. That precious remnant was left to the

[108] Distinguished Service Order.

Czechoslovaks. Of all the nations involved in the fateful events of September 1938, the Czechoslovaks alone kept unsullied their national honor and integrity. Czechoslovakia was drastically, tragically reduced in size and then wiped out of existence, but in moral stature the little nation towered high above those who in this hour had forced her to their will.

Chapter 18

Communist control of Czechoslovakia - February 1948

From the time of liberation in 1945 it became increasingly evident that sooner or later there must be a show-down as to whether the government of Czechoslovakia would be in the hands of the communists or whether other parties could share in the administration on a cooperative basis. Both sides in this struggle felt the need of strengthening their positions before the next general election scheduled for May 1948.

The bourgeois parties sensed that the Communist Party was packing the Interior Department with their supporters so as to have the full power of the police in their hands if needed. Accordingly the members in the Ministerial Council secured the approval in the Council of a request that the Minister of the Interior (a communist) restore to their possessions the non-communist police officers in Prague who had recently been supplanted by communists. No action was ever taken by the Ministry of the Interior upon this official request. Feeling that they could not ignore this open defiance of the will of the majority of the ministers by the communists, twelve of the non-ministers submitted their resignations to President Beneš. Their hope was that the President would take no action upon these resignations but, in view of the impasse, would dissolve Parliament and immediately proclaim a general election.

Prime Minister Gottwald[109] and his supporters, on the other hand, were urging the President to accept the resignations and to approve of a new cabinet in which only those would receive portfolios who would be willing to collaborate with the Communists. The time had now come for the show-down.

As armed workers organized by the Action Committees were streaming into Prague and the danger of street fighting seemed imminent, Beneš hesitated. At this critical moment Valerian A. Zorin,[110] former Soviet Ambassador to Czechoslovakia and then Deputy Foreign Minister in Moscow, arrived in Prague – ostensibly to supervise the delivery of wheat from Russia. On February 25th, Beneš yielded to Gottwald's insistence by accepting the resignations and approving a new list of ministers which had been drawn up by the Communist Party. Thus almost

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[109] Klement Gottwald (1896-1953) – one of the founders of the Communist Party in Czechoslovakia (1921) and its leader 1929-1953, member of Parliament since 1929, during World War II in Moscow, 1946-1948 Prime Minister, 1948-1953 President.

[110] Valerian A. Zorin (1902-1986) – in the 1950s and 1960s represented the U.S.S.R. in the United Nations Security Council.

overnight what had been the free democracy of Czechoslovakia was transformed into a totalitarian state on the recognized Soviet pattern.

How could this happen to a country so historically infused with ideas of liberty, whose Legions had fought the Communists victoriously in France, Italy and across the breadth of Russia and Siberia? How could such men as these surrender almost with no resistance to the *coup d'etat* of February 1948 – to place their country squarely within the Soviet orbit?

There are many explanations for this amazing debacle; any simplification of this question is certain to be fallacious. There are, however, a number of factors which must be taken into account. First and perhaps most important are the effects of the external political setting in which Czechoslovakia found itself at the conclusion of World War II. Decisive then and now is the inescapable fact of Munich. The betrayal of Czechoslovakia by the Western Powers left them, the Czechoslovaks felt, no other recourse than to turn to the Soviets for help. Further, by the West's failure to take a leading role in the country's liberation of 1945, the West, and specifically the United States, had all but forced Czechoslovakia into Soviet hands.

Other factors in this power seizure by the Soviets can be traced back to Munich. In 1948 Czech morale was at an all time low. The heroism of the Legions in Russia and Siberia, the fierce patriotism during the mobilization preceding Munich – all testify to the courage within them. But the Czechoslovak people had experienced only a score of years of freedom; they were unprepared for that test of 1938. So they capitulated to the demands of their former friends. There was bitterness, resentment and obedience. The vital élan of the nation snapped quickly.

One interpreter of recent Czech history had this to say in private conversation, "Our capitulation at the time of the Munich crisis broke the back of the nation. Its back was broken again by the German occupation. During that period nearly every family had at least one person who had been in prison or in a concentration camp --- or executed. Six years of German occupation following the terrible tensions of Munich left a people in so-called 'liberation' who had no courage to face another crisis. 'Let us be,' they said, 'Can't we live in peace for a while?' Only the communists seemed to have a plan and the zeal to work for its attainment."

It must be remembered also that Stalin had made two specific promises upon which Beneš counted heavily. First that the Soviet Union would recognize the boundaries of Czechoslovakia as they had been fixed during the Republic, and further that there would be no interference in the internal affairs of the country. These promises encouraged President Beneš in the complicated task of planning how to collaborate with Russia. The first promise was broken almost immediately when Sub-Carpathian Ruthenia was annexed with typical ruthlessness. While Beneš

probably was not yet ready in 1948 to admit Soviet involvement in the coup, the unexpected arrival in Prague of Mr. Zorin should have given him pause and forced him to the realization that "Uncle Joe" had lied to him.

Within Czechoslovakia the Communist Party emerged from the German occupation with numbers and influence greatly increased. It had played a significant role in the anti-Nazi underground movement. When visiting one infamous prison after another I read secret messages written on cell walls and recognized the phraseology of the communist-minded. The Nazis had treated the communists with special cruelty during imprisonment and extra torture when executed. These facts were well known, and while the Czech communists were no better patriots than others suffering similar persecution, they had managed to gain a reputation of super-patriotism during the occupation. And at the end of the war it was clear that laborers and farmers would turn first to the communists for leadership, leaving the non-communist parties to be dominated by the white-collar class.

Much has been said about Beneš' failure in this crisis. He was already a very sick man, his resistance lowered. In full vigor he might have shown more determined opposition to the Soviet take-over. By principle he considered himself a constitutional president, looking to the leaders of the various parties for political decisions. He never invoked the powers or prestige of his office. Knowing his popularity to be great, he hesitated to use it for what he considered political ends, though its full application might have saved his people. His was the gift of conciliation, which became a dreadful liability.

In 1948 there were those who refused to harbor any great fear as to the loss of national freedom in the obvious signs of mounting control over life of individual citizens. "The Czech communists will be different," they asserted. One questions if they would speak that way today.

The communist coup in Czechoslovakia was a shattering blow to the West, where hope was still held that Czechoslovakia, despite its ties with the Soviet Union, would remain an outpost of democratic freedom. The Czechoslovak people themselves were greatly confused as they watched the swift reorganization of national affairs on the communist pattern. Most saw no way out of their dilemma save by conforming to the communist world, willy nilly. Many sought refuge abroad, particularly the politically active non-communists, realizing how clearly marked they were for apprehension and imprisonment. Many were in the grip of despair, while, for a time, others sustained themselves with the fallacious hope that under communism "the truth will prevail."

The pattern of the new regime began to emerge in dreadful clarity. Early in March 1948 a friend wrote, "The other day I stood on a corner of the Wenceslas

Square and saw the lights go out at *Svobodné slovo* (Free Word, a non-communist newspaper). Across the Square were the headquarters of *Rudé právo* (Red Law, a communist daily). From there I could hear jubilant shouts ringing across the square, 'Colleagues, your lights have gone out!' I don't read the papers any more. Their tone is unbearable. The radio is even worse, and as it used to be in wartime we now rush home to be sure not to miss the London broadcast at nine o'clock."

On March 10th came a grievous blow to the Czech people and to their friends around the world – the death of Jan Masaryk. His body had been found early that morning in the stone courtyard below his apartment in the Czernin Palace. The official announcement said that he had jumped to his death, a suicide. Others had an entirely different explanation.

The communists spent all of that day and a long period thereafter explaining by press and radio that Masaryk had committed suicide because of the criticism directed at him by his friends from the West for remaining in the cabinet after the communist coup. There were many who felt that this was his way of protesting against the present regime. Still others felt that he broke under the strain of retaining his devotion to his friends in the West while at the same time continuing to stand by Beneš and his relations with the communists. Whatever the explanation, the shock to his countrymen and friends was beyond measuring. In the days immediately following, thousands upon thousands of people came to his bier at the Czernin Palace, weeping men and women and young people in a constant stream from early morning until long after midnight.

The reasons why the death of Jan Masaryk made such an impression upon his country and the world were set forth in countless editorials, interviews and memorial services. The following are excerpts from a memorial address given by this author at the church in Brooklyn where Jan's mother had worshipped:

The death of Jan Masaryk has brought a poignant sorrow not only to his countrymen but to thousands of individuals in many lands and in all walks of life whose lives he had touched and whose hearts he had warmed by his friendliness.

Jan Masaryk was a great friend. He had thousands of close and intimate friends whom he called by their first names and who thought of him as 'Jan' or even as 'Honza.' Jan Masaryk not only loved people in the mass, he liked individuals and they liked him. He was never too engrossed in the affairs of state to take time for a humble citizen of his country or for a friend abroad. As a consequence, untold multitudes who had warmed to his personality are now chilled to the marrow that he is no more.

When I first knew Jan Masaryk, he was a young man of 25. At that time no one, least of all Jan himself, would have predicted that he would become the Minister of Foreign Affairs of his homeland and one of its most beloved citizens.

There could not have been a more marked contrast between a father and a son than was presented by Thomas G. Masaryk and Jan. The father was dignified, reserved, scholarly – a person to be respected and revered and finally loved. In his earlier years the son had little dignity, few reserves, few intellectual interests. He seemed bent on having a good time, and he had it. Jan Masaryk never became a replica of his father, but he did achieve a serious purpose in life and he did make a magnificent contribution to his country and to the cause of freedom everywhere. Gay and entertaining he always remained, but beneath his quips and anecdotes and often by means of them he expressed his passionate devotion to human freedom. Jan Masaryk was more than the son of a great father. He became great in his own right, but the example and influence of his father entered into that greatness.

Jan was part American by birth and a much larger part by instinct. His love for America was second only to the love he bore his homeland. He knew the way the American mind works and could talk the language of America forcefully and vividly. Once when the representatives of all the new countries formed after World War I were asked by the United States Chamber of Commerce to speak on the business opportunities open in their new countries, each in turn spoke at length and in great detail in true European fashion. When at long last Masaryk's turn came, he rose and said, 'My name is Masaryk. I represent Czechoslovakia. My address is _____. My telephone number is _____. If you would like to hear of business opportunities in my country I should be glad if you would call upon me.' As he sat down, Masaryk had more applause than all the others put together and he certainly won more friends than by a long speech. Jan Masaryk had a flair for friendship as well as public relations; we have missed him much in America.

I shall never forget his broadcasts from London during the opening days of World War II. Once driving along a Detroit boulevard I pulled to the curb hearing his familiar voice on the program, 'London Calling.' He came across the air waves vibrant with feeling, 'The hour of retribution is here. The limits of the patience of the Western democracies have been reached and the struggle to exterminate Nazism has begun. Our program is a free Czechoslovakia in a free Europe and for the attainment of this we are ready to sacrifice all. By the name I bear I solemnly declare that we shall win the fight. We are not afraid and we shall never give up the fight.'

That voice has been stilled, you say – but has it? Even in his death Jan Masaryk spoke for freedom and during the months and years ahead whenever his name is mentioned and the memory of his radiant personality warms the heart those of us who knew and loved him will think of his passion for freedom and dedicate ourselves anew to its cause.

On the same day that the news of the death of Jan Masaryk was blazoned across the front pages of the New York newspapers another Czechoslovak was directing the world's attention to the problems of his country and also making headlines.

Dr. Ján Papánek,[111] then the permanent delegate of Czechoslovakia in the United

[111] Ján Papánek (1896-1991) – born in Slovakia, died in New York.

Nations, at a widely attended press conference presented a statement which caused a sensation. He charged that the government of Czechoslovakia had been undermined and placed in jeopardy through force by a communist minority which had been encouraged and given promises of help if needed by the representatives of the Government of the Soviet Union. This was in effect a charge that the Soviet Union had intervened in the internal affairs of another member of the United Nations. This charge had been placed before Trygve Lie, the General Secretary of the United Nations,[112] with the request that it be brought before the Security Council for investigation. When Lie under pressure refused to take such action, the matter seemed to have been quashed as far as the United Nations was concerned. However, the Government of Chile later took the case of Czechoslovakia before the Security Council. There followed a heated debate which lasted for ten weeks until the question of investigating the case was tabled by veto of the Soviet Union. The Czechoslovak case has remained on the agenda ever since; it may be brought up at any time the member nations so desire.

The scene at the United Nations on March 10th, 1948, was dramatic. Ján Papánek, long an intimate friend of Masaryk, was red-eyed and weary as he faced the reporters. He told them that ever since the communists had taken control in his country he had wanted to take some action, but had awaited further developments. "Some time ago," he said, "Masaryk had drawn me aside and had told me not to give up. 'There are difficulties ahead,' he warned me, 'but do not take any action as long as I am Foreign Minister.' You know what happened today," continued Papánek. "I must speak now."

As a consequence of his bold action at the United Nations, Papánek lost his post as permanent delegate of Czechoslovakia, but retained his position as one of the best and most widely trusted Czechoslovaks living in the United States. He was in constant demand as a lecturer and writer, also as an adviser in Washington. But Ján Papánek wanted action. He found it in attempting to deal with the problems of those who were escaping from communist Czechoslovakia and needed help in resettling elsewhere. Convinced that no regime can be constructively effective which drives thousands of its citizens to seek safety and livelihood beyond its borders, the governments of the free world and many private organizations and individual citizens came to feel that the relief and rehabilitation of the life of political refugees was a much needed and valuable humanitarian effort. Dr. Papánek organized and

[112] Trygve Lie (1896-1968) – Norwegian politician, 1st proper Secretary General of the United Nations 1946-1952.

has since directed the American Fund for Czechoslovak Refugees.[113] I have had the privilege of working with him in that effort, helping as a member of the Board of Directors to determine plans and policies and serving for two years (1955-1957) as the European Director of the work with headquarters in Munich.

Many of the Czechoslovak refugees gained entrance into the United States. The task of processing refugees under the complex and difficult legislation which we were obliged to interpret was a trying one. There has been great satisfaction, however, in seeing some of the concrete results. Here is one example of successful resettlement.

An officer in the Czechoslovak Army, a veteran of the Czechoslovak units formed in England during the war, became restive under the new regime and decided to cross the border. By the time his preparations were complete, the communist government had began to guard the border in earnest. The Colonel decided to divide his family: He and his daughter would go one day; his wife and his son to follow on the next. Father and daughter crossed safely, but mother and son were captured and placed in prison, where they remained for ten years. The daughter was able to finish her education at the University of Strasbourg where she met and married a Slovak engineer. As his skills were in great demand they had no difficulty in emigrating to the States and finding work here.

For the Colonel the case was radically different. He was in his fifties, counted "old" among refugees. Further he hesitated to go to America. "I do not want to put the wide ocean between me and my wife," he said. I reminded him that the ocean was no longer an insurmountable barrier. The main consideration will be to secure her release from prison and then permission for her to go to America after you, I told him. Rather to my surprise, the Colonel applied for and received his visa and left for America. He has now been in this country five years, living in the same community as his children and grandchildren and working as a superintendent in a housing development. Remembering his military bearing and training, those of us who knew him commented when we heard that he had six porters working under him – "I expect that the Colonel by now has them all drilling up and down the apartment house court." Word has come that at last the mother and the son have been released from prison in Czechoslovakia and by the good offices of the

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[113] The organization was founded in 1948 with headquarters in New York. In addition to refugees from Czechoslovakia it was authorized by the U.S. government to assist also those from Southeast Asia in the 1970s (following the Vietnam War). In 1990, it changed its name to American Fund for Czechoslovak Relief and was active in supporting student exchange and other programs of cooperation between the U.S. and the Czech Republic along with Slovakia. The organization ceased to exist in 2007.

International Red Cross the family is now reunited in America.

Another individual's problem involved the Munich Pact and Chamberlain's part in it, the problem of the Near East, and the whole question of the treatment of the Jews by the Nazis during the war period. When the Communist coup occurred many of the diplomatic representatives of the Czechoslovak government abroad resigned their posts immediately. Among them was the Czechoslovak Consul General in Jerusalem. When I first learned of his plight in 1956 he was living in a monastery in Jerusalem. He was anxious by then to move elsewhere, but he too was in his fifties and where to find an opening for him was a question. We managed after long and due process to bring him to Munich where we could deal with his situation at first hand. It was then that I thought of the British Czechoslovak Trust Fund as a possible solution. This takes us back to Chamberlain and the Munich Pact. The authorities in Britain evidently had considerable guilt feelings for their part in "selling Czechoslovakia down the river." As a consequence a large fund was authorized by Parliament to be used for the relief of Czechoslovak victims of Nazi oppression. This money was used in most constructive ways up to 1945 when the liberation of Czechoslovakia made such grant in aid unnecessary. The matter of further disposition of the funds was still under debate in Britain when the 1948 communist coup occurred, and the brave refugees from communist Czechoslovakia were in even more pressing need of help. There was then set up the "Trust Fund for Czechoslovak Refugees" under the auspices of the British Home Office with well planned provisions designed to aid in resettling certain Czech refugees, namely those not eligible for entry into other countries with especial reference to the aged and infirm.

When the case of the ex-consul from Jerusalem came before the Trustees of the Fund it was quickly accepted but then another obstacle arose. When this man left Jerusalem he possessed only a *laissez passer*, being a stateless person without a passport. The British authorities felt they could not accept this, "He must have a valid travel document on the basis of which he can return to Germany in the event that things do not work out well in England," so ran the next report I received. What to do now?

Our office in Munich had found it useful to maintain friendly relations with the local police, especially in the matter of travel documents. This was not always easy for the Germans wasted no love on the Czechs. We knew, however, that one refugee agency (and that the least likely, being, HIAS – the organization for Jewish aid) seldom had any real difficulty with the *politzei*. I rang up the Director and told my story. What chance for a genuine *Reisedokument* for our man? "Send him down with one of your staff and I will see what can be done," was the answer. An hour or

so later or ex-consul returned, a good German passport in hand, "I never saw the German police act so fast or be so friendly. Must be guilt feelings for the way they treated the Jews." Imagine my astonishment when about a year later he telephoned my office in New York. He now had a job as an interpreter with a British shipping line, serving other refugees en route to American ports. This was excellent placement as the man spoke four languages fluently.

Czechoslovak refugees were scattered over Western Germany and there were large groups in Austria, France and Italy. In arranging for their resettlement we had to negotiate with other governmental authorities around the world. The regulations governing reception of refugees set up by the United States were at that time more complicated and strict than those of any other country. As America was the country of first choice for nearly all escapees we had much red tape to unwind which came from and led back to Washington. We had also to deal with Great Britain, Canada, Australia, Brazil, Argentine, Southern Rhodesia, Nyassaland,[114] Holland, Belgium, Sweden, and Norway!

The last named country, Norway, while one of the smallest among them and with limited resources, I found one of the most liberal and generous of them all in its attitude towards refugees. Norway had a special interest in the Czechoslovaks due in large measure to the complicated life story of one individual. During the war this Czechoslovak found herself in the same Nazi concentration camp with a group of Norwegian women. Out of privation and shared suffering had come deep friendship; she was to say later, "Nothing like cleaning out latrines together for making friends."

After the war was over she returned to her liberated Czechoslovakia only to be again imprisoned by the communists as a politically unreliable person. In time she was released, and managed to find her way to West Berlin. From there she telephoned to a friend in Oslo and received as reply, "Come to Oslo as soon as possible; a visa and entry permit will be sent to you today."

Receiving such liberal treatment herself this lady was prompted to join forces with a group of her Norwegian friends to initiate a program of action on behalf of other Czechoslovak refugees. It was resolved that Norway should take "hard core" cases: tuberculosis patients, crippled and aged – persons who were excluded by most countries including the United States. They then arranged for housing, language study, job training and placement, with the result that in a short time most of these difficult "cases" had been transformed into useful citizens fitting quite easily the

[114] Today's Republic of Malawi in southeastern Africa, gained independence from Great Britain in 1966.

Norwegian economy.

Another project of the Norwegian committee was the summer vacation plan for Czechoslovak children. For over eight years the kindly people of Norway had entertained hundreds of our youngsters from Germany and Austria. Welcomed in Norwegian families (of farmers, workers, or well-to-do industrialists), these children returned in September healthy and happy and --- speaking Norwegian! Quite a number were adopted by their foster families, remaining in Norway permanently. One year I went ahead to greet the children as they arrived at Oslo and met their summer hosts; the happiness was mutual. This project, so far-reaching in terms of international friendship, was due almost entirely to the vision and energetic good will of one woman who had suffered much and wanted to save others from such a fate.

In all some 60,000 refugees from communist Czechoslovakia have been resettled under the various programs; about 17,000 are in the United States.[115] Though there is deep satisfaction in securing replacement for so many stateless persons no one would be so foolish as to compare life in a new location with the normal process of living in one's homeland. However, these thousands have in greater or less degree worked out a life scheme under conditions they had long lacked – security and freedom. I suspect that is what we are all working for, a little place in the sun, intellectually and economically, within the sweet climate of liberty.

The contrasts have been sharp. Here a man of deep integrity longing through the years of exile to bring his son, born in Germany, to the good hope of America. He is stopped by the strength of his family ties which preclude the emigration of an elderly parent, so with fine courage he gives himself to the aid of other refugees and finds peace passing his belief. In another instance a young couple, married before the 1948 coup, beat their hearts out for more than seven years of frustration in exile, hoping against hope through repeated rebuffs. Then the situation is reversed, a miracle occurred: They came to America, are citizens now and real members of the family of their "Uncle Sam." To this "uncle from America" the card of gratitude received regularly on the anniversary of their entry brings a tremendous sense of reward.

[115] By the time of KDM's writing and revisions, i.e. in the mid-1960s. The numbers further increased after that, especially following the occupation of Czechoslovakia by the armies of the Soviet Union and several of its satellites in 1968, and kept rising until 1989.

Chapter 19

The long night and the grey dawn

On October 5th, 1938, Edvard Beneš resigned as President of the Czechoslovak Republic. On October 23rd he took flight to London to begin another period of exile – this one to last for six and a half years.

The truncated Czecho-Slovakia set up in accordance with the Munich pact was not to be long for this world. On March 15th, 1939, Hitler's troops took possession of the country and the Fuehrer proclaimed the establishment of the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia. As the Germans marched in, the streets of Prague were lined with crowds of utterly silent people. That day the Czechs were a grim, anguished and stricken citizenry. Some turned their backs upon the triumphal procession of the Germans; some spat at these goose-stepping men; some wept. Hitler rode up the hill to the Castle, sat in the presidential chair which Masaryk and Beneš had vacated, slept in the presidential bed and the next day stepped out on the balcony to look down on a conquered city. To those around him he exclaimed, "This is the greatest day of my life! I shall go down in history as the greatest German!"

The next day Hitler took Slovakia under the same malevolent protection and Sub-Carpathian Ruthenia was annexed to Hungary. Now he could boastfully proclaim, "Czechoslovakia has ceased to exist," while an American reporter (William L. Shirer) would truthfully state, "A long time of German savagery now settled over Prague and the Czech lands."

Elsewhere governments were beginning to repent of Munich. The peoples of the world, shocked by what had transpired, voiced protests so vigorous that even the ministers who had acceded supinely to Hitler's demands now realized that they had gone too far and protested too little. Further German aggression must be halted, they now realized.

The four great powers – Britain, France, Russia and the United States, all refused to recognize the sovereignty of the German Reich over Czechoslovakia, Colonel Vladimír Hurban,[116] the Czechoslovak Ambassador at Washington, was widely acclaimed for his refusal to turn over the Czechoslovak Legation to the Germans. President Beneš, who was then lecturing at the University of Chicago, and Jan Masaryk who had resigned his post as Czechoslovak Ambassador to the court of St. James and had also come to America, joined in a series of public meetings. They

[116] Vladimír Hurban (1883-1949) – journalist, veteran of the Legion in Russia, diplomat, served in Egypt, Sweden and the United States.

made "An Appeal to the American People" to work with them for "A Freed Czechoslovakia in a Freed Europe."

There was no question as to the response of the Czechs and Slovaks. In Chicago 10,000 of them gathered to hear Beneš beg them to unite in their blood brotherhood and to "prepare for your nation's freedom in a free Europe." While in America Beneš took the lead in a movement looking toward the inclusion of the liberation of Czechoslovakia among the war aims of the Allied Powers. He had a confidential meeting with President Roosevelt at Hyde Park at which a promise of cooperation was given. He induced his compatriots in the United States to support a world wide program to persuade Czechoslovak diplomatic representatives the world over to remain at their posts and to make it financially possible for them to do so. Beneš also gave whole-hearted support to the measures taken on behalf of refugees from Czechoslovakia. Jan Masaryk brought to bear upon the multitudes who heard him in America the power of his dynamic personality. His countrymen in America heard him make one of his stirring calls to battle. "We were sold out with the aid of the devil himself," he said. "Today we must begin to work. We can weep a little, but not for long. The time for work has come. We must work for our people suffering at home. No one can say a word there, so completely have they been silenced. But we must speak up for humanity."

While the Czechs and Slovaks in America rallied to the cause of Czechoslovak freedom, throughout the United States as a whole there was a sharp division of opinion regarding the issues raised by the European war. There was an America First Committee (Isolationist), and a Committee to Defend America by Aiding the Allies (interventionist). Many Americans were extremely reluctant to have the government to take steps which would align this country on either side of the conflict.

However, many other Americans had no hesitation whatever in showing their concern for the plight of the Allied countries and from the very outset of the war joined together to render what volunteer assistance was possible. Such organizations as British War Relief, Bundles for Britain, Relief for France and similar efforts for Belgium, Holland and Norway were major operations that meant much to the countries involved. As soon as the Czechs and the Slovaks came under the Nazi yoke it became evident that assistance must be given to those who found it necessary to flee into exile. The Jews in Bohemia, Moravia and Slovakia, others who had been so active politically as to be marked men in the eyes of the Nazis, and who simply refused to live in the same country with the Germans, departed as quickly as possible for France, England, North and South America, the Near East, where ever they could find refuge. Their needs were varied but so urgent that we who had a deep

concern for the Czechoslovak people knew that the time for concerted action had arrived.

American Relief for Czechoslovakia was immediately organized to enlist the help of various groups of Czechs and Slovaks as well as to interest persons of influence who could tap the resources of other relief agencies, patriotic groups and individuals. After the United States entered the war and the number of organizations soliciting funds for overseas relief multiplied, the State Department saw the necessity to audit and certify such organizations under the supervision of a federally appointed committee. So there was effected an overall relief organization, the National War Fund, with joint budgets and united appeals, which was to prove most successful.

At the war's end when Czechoslovakia was liberated, new problems and needs confronted American Relief making necessary the dispatch of skilled personnel for service in Prague and throughout the country. Mr. and Mrs. Waitstill Sharp and Miss Vlasta Vráz were the first to enter the liberated Czechoslovakia to plan and supervise the relief work there.[117]

As Chairman of American Relief for Czechoslovakia, I flew to Prague in July 1946 to see the situation at first hand. In company with Miss Vráz and Mr. Sharp I visited the most depressed sections of the country. We spent some time in Pilsen and in southern Moravia, and made an inspection tour of eight welfare institutions in Slovakia. We visited the area around Orava in Slovakia where the fighting between the German and Russian armies had been heavy and destructive; also the mining country near Moravská Ostrava where the families of coal miners were in sore distress. Meanwhile we discussed with the citizens in each section the sharpest needs of the people for food, clothing, medicines and, above all, the prime necessity of a child welfare program.

Talking at length with many individuals and groups, I learned how dreadfully bitter life had been under German occupation. It was all too evident that Shirer's characterization of the occupation as "the dark night of German savagery" was just one. I listened to the story repeated in every village, every home – tales of bestial cruelty. These people were tortured by the awful memory of the German Security Police, the Gestapo. In tension and fear they waited for the knock on the door in

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[117] Waitstill Sharp (1902-1984) – Unitarian minister, active previously in American efforts to organize refugee relief in Czechoslovakia in 1939, assisting Czech escapees from the Sudetenland ceded to Germany after the Munich Pact (September 1938).

Vlasta Vráz (1902-1989) – daughter of Czech traveler Enrique Stanko Vráz (1860-1932) was active in Czech American organizations, namely the Czechoslovak National Council in America after WWII.

the dead of night when the police would enter to search for short-wave radios, for forbidden reading matter or for correspondence of a compromising nature. Or for the summary arrest and imprisonment. The school system was completely revised to conform to Nazi ideology. Street signs and public notices were now in German, with smaller Czech lettering beneath. Pictures of Masaryk, Beneš and Wilson, books by them or about them were contraband. There was no longer to be a university for Czech students. Since they were to be reduced to the rank of manual laborers, college education would be superfluous.

The Czech people were inducted into a vast laboratory testing the Nazi philosophy; they became human guinea pigs for the nefarious experiments of the "master race," and the "undesirable elements" among themselves, headed, of course, by the Jews, but including a large part of the Czech intelligentsia were destined for extermination.

One of the more important centers established for the liquidation of these "undesirable elements" was at Terezín, (Theresienstadt). I had the opportunity to visit this infamous center with a Czech friend who had spent four years in solitary confinement there expecting every day to be executed on the morrow. This prison was set up in a fortress dating from the time of Marie Therese, and over its long history had specialized in the incarceration of political prisoners. Here was held for many years Princip,[118] the assassin of Archduke Ferdinand of Austria whose murder precipitated World War I. Here hundreds of actual or potential political leaders among the Czechs were imprisoned, for the Nazis were determined to silence the voices of any who appeared capable of popular leadership.

The first thing I saw was the admissions office. Here new prisoners were stripped, fumigated, beaten and given prison clothes. The first night a new arrival was pushed into a room about 10 feet square intended as a cell for one person. Here as many as twenty-seven prisoners were often crowded; there was standing room only, and as the sole ventilation was a small opening in the door. Many fainted and were carried out in the morning dead. There were fourteen such fatalities in one morning. I saw modern torture chambers, like so many Procrustean beds, designed to stretch the limbs of prisoners so that they would divulge the names of other anti-Nazis. I saw on the ceiling the dark marks made by shoes of struggling men strung upside down to force information from them. I saw the gallows where Czech prisoners were forced at gun point to hang each other in succession; Jewish prisoners being sent in to dispatch the last hangman and bury the lot.

I saw the place where SS Guards made sport of Jewish prisoners who had been

[118] Gavrilo Princip (1894-1918) – died at Terezín on April 28, 1918, of tuberculosis.

brought from the nearby concentration camp for that purpose.

Within the prison compound was a deep ditch or moat five feet wide with a turgid sewage stream of some depth running through it. Here the Jews were forced to play a deadly leap frog by jumping back and forth over the ditch until exhausted they fell to their death. For men so depleted by starvation and torture the game could not be a long one, but the guards and even the commandant with his women watched with all sporting instinct, betting on their choice for "winner" as if at a horse race. Behind his own bars now I saw the prison chief, one Heinrich Joekl; looking through the hole in his cell door I could make out his hard bullet head, catch a glint of the rage in his pig-like eyes. In another cell was his wife whose reputation for sadism had been perhaps even worse than his. She used to go down the line of prisoners scratching their faces with her long fingernails.

The concentration camp for Jews was located about a mile away on the site of the former town of Terezín. In November 1941 soon after he was named Reichsprotector of Bohemia and Moravia, Reinhard Heydrich,[119] the Number Two man after Himmler in the SS, who had headed the Security Service and the Gestapo in Germany, began the operations in the Protectorate which earned him the nickname "The Hangman." One of his first acts was to order the evacuation of the 10,000 inhabitants of the town of Terezín, and to arrange for the reception there of 70,000 Jews from Prague and Pilsen. It was announced that this was a special ghetto for a select, and deserving group of Jews. It came to have the reputation of a privileged place and when Jews learned that they were to be sent there they were relieved. The relief was short-lived. During 1942, 125,000 souls passed through this camp. Many of these were later sent to Birkenau, Auschwitz and other dreaded concentration camps. During the reign of terror following the assassination of Heydrich, three thousand prisoners in this "privileged" ghetto were shipped east for extermination. During 1943 and 1944 there were on the average 35,000 Jews in this camp which was administered under the supervision of Adolf Eichmann.[120] There were still 12,000 there when the camp and the prison were liberated by Russian troops in May 1945.

Every single person who talked with me about the Nazi occupation had much to say about the fury which possessed the Nazis when Heydrich was killed. Heydrich,

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[119] Reinhard Heydrich (1904-1942) – assassinated in Prague on May 27, 1942 (died of his wounds on June 4, 1942).

[120] Adolf Eichmann (1906-1962) – prominent SS-officer, during his WWII career in charge of transportation of Jews to the extermination camps. He was captured in Argentine by Israeli secret service in 1960, and subsequently sentenced and executed in Israel.

a ready-made caricature of cruelty, a long-nosed, icy-eyed, was a thirty-eight-year old policeman, the genius of the "final solution" for Czechs and Jews. He had come to be thought of as the very personification of Nazi hate and savagery. His office was in the Prague Castle, as was thought fitting for the No. 1 German in the Protectorate. On May 27th, 1942, while Heydrich rode in his open top car from his villa towards the Castle, two parachutists from the Free Czechoslovak Army in England who had landed near Prague, hurled a bomb which fatally injured him. When Heydrich died a few days later, the wrath and revenge of the Nazis, personally directed by Hitler, was wreaked upon the people of Prague. Each day a list of arrests and executions was published in the newspaper with the warning that these killings would continue until the whereabouts of Heydrich's assassins was revealed. In Prague alone over 1,300 Czechs were murdered in those days of horror and when the actual assassins and their accomplices were found another 120 were executed.

Nor was that the end. The little town of Lidice, near Prague, was selected for a terrible act of revenge. What happened at Lidice became then and for as long as men will remember the black symbol of Nazi terror. It was a small village; German accuracy gives us the complete roster of 485 souls. Two hundred men were liquidated by a firing squad. One hundred ninety-five women were taken to concentration camps where many died from cruel treatment. Ninety children of Lidice were separated from their mothers in another prison camp. Here these babies were processed to evaluate their racial fitness, intelligence, even their physical perfection. No one knows what happened to those who failed such tests. The filthiest de-nationalization was the fate of the remaining "pure Aryans," turned over to German families to be brought up as Nazi youth. These Czech children, never to know their true ancestry, were so completely Germanized in their most malleable years that at the end of the war only a handful could be found and liberated.

In 1946 I visited the village of Lidice. Absolutely nothing remained to testify that once there stood here the decent homes of decent human beings. The tree-lined lanes were obliterated, gone were the birds that sang in the branches. No men worked the land, no women wove their dreams into the lives of their children or the fabrics for their clothing. The Nazis had boasted that Lidice would be so completely destroyed that even the name would be forgotten. How wrong they were, these would-be annihilators of history! Lidice is a lovely name and lives again in villages of other lands. The old Lidice has been neatly leveled and tenderly cared for by the Czech people. Now it broods over its martyrs in the solemn beauty of remembrance.

But never, hangman, never from your face
Shall death or time or blood erase
That massacre of youth.
Nor any self-dug death pits hide one trace
Of their fierce love of truth;
Burn a thousand Lidices to the ground;
New Lidices will spring up: The desolate space
Charred, choked with ashes,
And dead birds all around,
Will consecrate a holy place
Drenched with the blood that flames and flashes
Wherever Czechoslovaks and freedom's dream are found.[121]

I talked with many individuals about the liberation. They were happy people, but I heard many expressions of regret that American troops had not reached the city of Prague before the Russians. This would have been easy of accomplishment as General Patton's troops, after their lightning dash across Germany, had occupied Pilsen and were within fifty miles of Prague before their advance was halted. General Eisenhower had so ordered in accordance with an agreement between the United States and the Soviet Union as to the occupation of Czechoslovakia. Unfortunately for us the only bombs which fell on Prague were dropped in error by American planes in the center of the Wenceslas Square. This would seem to have been a minor matter, but it all had a direct bearing upon the orientation of the Czech people at the beginning of liberation. The idea spread that the Western Powers were not really interested in Czechoslovakia. Americans, they said, did not even respond to desperate appeals for help sent out over the radio by Czechs leading the street fighting in Prague. There was much talk of the atrocities by Russian troops as they swept across the country from the east, but nevertheless the Soviet Union, not America, became known as the liberator of the country.

The final chapter in the Sudeten German storm was being written during my visit to Czechoslovakia in 1946. At a meeting soon after the end of the war, the Allied Powers had agreed that the Germans living in this disputed territory, over two million of them, should be expelled to Germany.[122] There was much criticism of this plan as being a heartless piece of mass extradition. Miss Vráz and I went out to Marianské Lázně to see for ourselves. It was a sad sight. Here were the inhabitants

[121] Quoted from "Letter to the Unconquerable Czechoslovaks" (p. 13) in "The Unconquerables" by Joseph Auslander, Simon and Schuster, Inc., New York, 1943.
[122] The Potsdam Conference (near Berlin), held during July 17 – August 2, 1945.

of an entire village whose families had lived there for generations being marched out of town, allowed only such possessions as they could carry. At the railroad station they entrained for Bavaria where they were to be placed in camp prior to resettlement there and elsewhere in Germany. They were broken and they were bitter; I was to encounter that bitterness in Bavaria ten years later.

But some of my Czech friends said to me, "If you had lain awake as we did waiting for the fatal rap on the door by Nazi police sent among us by the Sudeten Germans, you would not wonder that we are relieved to see them go. We tried to deal with this minority fairly and justly, and the result was the Nazi occupation. Now we simply do not wish to live in the same country with them any longer." After some years the Sudeten Germans established themselves in the bourgeoning economy of West Germany and today they are prospering, but it is too much to expect that they should bear good will toward the Czechs.

Of greatest concern to everyone was the question of the immediate future of Czechoslovakia. President Beneš was there and had been welcomed enthusiastically and many people felt a deep reassurance in his very presence. Miss Vráz and I had a long interview with the President at his summer home in Moravia. He was most cordial, very hopeful, indeed optimistic. He was sure that a *modus vivendi* could be worked out between the communists and the other political parties. In fact, he expressly stated the hope that Czechoslovakia could be a bridge between East and West, thereby playing an important role in the European political situation.

Not everyone was as optimistic as Beneš; this I soon discovered in many group discussions of the political situation. Grave misgivings were expressed based on what were felt to have been errors in planning the post-liberation government. It was realized, remembering Munich, that the future partnership of Czechoslovakia must be with the Soviet Union, not the western powers. So people understood why Beneš and the other members of his government in exile in London felt it necessary to go to Moscow to confer with Soviet officials and Czech communists who had been there throughout the war and who had the confidence of Stalin and some influence with those around him.

Chief among the Czechs at Moscow were: Zdeněk Fierlinger, a Social Democrat, long-time Czechoslovak Ambassador to Moscow and a close collaborator with the Kremlin;[123] and Klement Gottwald, the leader of the Communist Party and the

[123] Zdeněk Fierlinger (1891-1976) – veteran of the Czechoslovak Legion in Russia, diplomat having served (in addition to the U.S.S.R.) in the Netherlands, Romania, the United States and Austria. After 1948 Fierlinger was instrumental in the process of incorporating the

ablest among them. At Moscow it was decided to set up "National Committees" in every community. These would continue the struggle for liberation and administer their concerned areas provisionally until a government could be established. The Moscow communists saw to it that these committees were communist-dominated. While Beneš was to be recognized as President, the leading posts in the Ministry were filled with party members so that the army, police, communications and transportation would be in their hands. Non-communists were to be allotted positions in the cabinet carrying more prestige than power. Jan Masaryk was designated Foreign Minister without party affiliation. However, while he was in Moscow Klement Gottwald informed Masaryk bluntly that the foreign policy of Czechoslovakia must be based on complete cooperation with the Soviet Union. All these arrangements were supposedly based on mutual faith and cooperation between the Communist Party on the one hand and the existent democratic parties on the other. There were many men of prescience who gravely doubted the possibility of such close co-existence.

The election of May 1946 had given the Communist party 38% of the vote, making it the largest single party and giving it the right to organize a government. Non-communists were thankful that the percentage was not larger and counted on its reduction at the next election in 1948. "By that time people will have had enough of the communists, their policies and programs," many friends told me. But the communists were determined to show at least 51% of the vote in the next election in order to gain a firmer control of the government. The events of the next years were largely determined by moves and countermoves made by all parties looking to 1948.

Czechoslovak Social Democratic Party into the Communist Party which he himself joined and served in high posts.

Chapter 20

An interpretation

Though its historical connotation is humorous, the sobriquet "Uncle from America" does attest to a deep, not to say avuncular, interest in the Czechoslovak people. The ties of affection and respect that bound the young student still hold him today, these many years later. Age has not lessened fealty.

The whole experience of becoming acquainted with a hitherto alien people, learning their language, taking part for however short a time in their daily life, sharing the common human customs, watching the processes of their minds and spirits – this constitutes a life-long and intriguing adventure in understanding.

Too often our contacts with members of groups who are strangers or foreigners to us are on such a superficial level as to allow either prejudice or sentimentality to lead us into vague and misleading generalities. "Americans are all chasers of the almighty dollar"; "How crude these Americans are!" Europeans often exclaim after one casual contact with an American tourist. A visitor to New York takes one ride on the subway at rush hour and comments, "These New Yorkers are always pushing and shoving to get ahead." One reads a sensational newspaper article picturing juvenile delinquency and drug addiction among the Puerto Ricans in New York and thereafter looks for a "mugger" in every dark-skinned Spanish speaking youth he meets. "These Negroes are all inferior, not fit to study and work with a white man," we hear another say. If we believe that, how do we account for the fine record negro students are making in our great universities?

Anyone who lives and works among peoples of different backgrounds must spend an inordinate amount of time denying the validity of such generalizations, insisting upon exceptions, qualifications, reservations. Ever and always pointing out the positive qualities of character to be found among the members of each such group.

Even one with the "family feeling" of an "uncle" must avoid both easy generalizations and the temptation to idealize and sentimentalize. He must be ready to accept human flaws in the character fabric of even these people he has learned to call friends. Some of them will prove unduly sensitive to criticism, resentful of suspected negative reactions, carrying always a chip on the shoulder. Others will be quick to attack one of their own group who has established for himself a position of leadership in an organization, a community or a nation. (T. G. Masaryk was almost above criticism but even he had opponents. Today, tearing down the reputation of a Masaryk is one of the favorite occupations of the communist regime.) The Czechoslovaks are capable of the deepest feeling of joy, of admiration, of love, but

they can plumb the depth of depression or give way to gnawing suspicion or black hatred. Not for nothing was it said, "The Slavs are a dark people." This is a hard-working people both in intellectual pursuits or in skilled labor. They learned under Austria and even more under the Nazi occupation a lesson which no doubt is forced practice under communism. They know how to soldier on the job, too, and how to commit sabotage skillfully. It is not without reason that "The Good Soldier Švejk" is one of their most popular literary figures.[124]

The Czechoslovaks with the keenest dramatic sense are masters in the art of staging a demonstration of tremendous enthusiasm. The Legionnaires proved that when they set out to fight in Russia; the populace of Prague when Masaryk came home; the whole country when their army mobilized against the Germans in 1938 and when Prague was liberated in 1945. They can also reach the depths of sorrow and despair: when T. G. Masaryk died and when the Germans marched into Prague. On that occasion the people of the city dressed in deep mourning and trooped en masse to the Old Town Square where each one laid a wreath at the foot of the statue of Jan Hus as their farewell to the truth that had vanished. When Jan Masaryk and later Beneš died, the mourning was nation-wide. When the communists took over the people sensed that they were passing through fateful days. It must be said, however, that in Czechoslovakia and elsewhere the Communists themselves are past masters at whipping up popular demonstrations. So it was in February 1948.

There are certain aspects of recent Czechoslovak history which even the warmest friends cannot accept. The expulsion of the Sudeten Germans was such an episode, but at least that action was explicable. One could be irritated by the factionalism displayed by Czechoslovak societies in America, but still understand it. An American might not be happy about the way the Czech people turned against America following liberation, but he could see a reason for it in the bungling American strategy leaving the occupation of Prague to the Red Army.

Many friends of Czechoslovakia around the world were stunned by the communist coup in 1948 which they have not been able to understand. They had known Czechoslovaks at their best in the days when they were fighting valiantly against not only the Bolshevik army but also against the whole ideological basis of

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[124] The main character from a novel by Jaroslav Hašek (1883-1923), himself a veteran of the Austrian Army during WWI. He eventually deserted his unit at the Eastern front and joined other Czech prisoners of war in the Czechoslovak Legion. Later he was recruited by the Red Army. The novel "Osudy dobrého vojáka Švejka za světové války" (The Good Soldier Švejk: and his fortunes in the World War) was published in 4 parts in 1921-1924.

communism. Now it seemed that the nation had reached its nadir when they gave in so easily to the coup and then proceeded to set up a government under which the people are more rigidly controlled than in any other communist country.

For those who had set great store by the republic of Masaryk and Beneš, these were days of anguish. Dr. Josef Korbel in his book "The Communist Subversion of Czechoslovakia"[125] catches the mood of many in his moving account of the abdication on June 7, 1948 of Edvard Beneš as President of the Czechoslovak Republic:

> It was a quiet scene. A broken man affixed his signature to a document … stepped out into the grounds of his unpretentious villa to watch the quiet striking of the presidential flag. And that was all. The act of abdication had taken place.
>
> "But this was more than an act of abdication. (…) It was a certificate of death for the democratic hope and dreams and struggles of a nation, born only thirty years before with high aspiration, now brought to its grave by the violence and terror of militant communism, its democratic institutions in ruins and in their place the somber and soulless architecture of communist totalitarianism.

But why this victory for communism? The explanations are numerous. The Munich pact which turned the country from the West and led to close relations with the East; the astuteness of the Czechoslovak communists and the obvious weakness of the opposition; the clever manipulation of the Soviet Union – these are some of the explanations most frequently heard.

Is there not a deeper reason, one that is rooted back in the history of the Czechoslovak people? One student of the recent era of this land points out that Czechoslovakia had only twenty years of democracy and freedom. That is not long enough to build sufficient moral stamina to endure the Nazi terrors of 1938 plus six years of German occupation and be expected to handle the liberation of 1945 as strong, convinced democrats, both ready and able to fight in defense of their political freedom.

History would indicate that freedom and democracy are a long time growing into the strength that can withstand endless assaults. Sir Arthur Bryant in "Makers of England"[126] points out that the Anglo-Saxon civilization out of which the democracy and freedom of the English-speaking world stems has its roots in brave

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[125] Josef Korbel – "The Communist Subversion of Czechoslovakia; the failure of coexistence," Princeton University Press, 1959, p. 3.

[126] Arthur Bryant – "Makers of England," Doubleday & Co., New York, pp. 61-62.

people for whom there was only one rule:

> To accept without flinching whatever the Fates had in store. The craven whined; the valiant kept his grief in his heart. The worse fortune treated him, the truer he must be to creed and comrade; the craven and traitor could only gain shame by their baseness. The hero at least lived on in his comrades' memory; the coward drowned in the mud beneath the feet of those he had betrayed.
>
> It was a rough, masculine creed, without much subtlety or refinement. It judged men not by what they said or thought but by their deeds. Yet it bread a sense of duty and responsibility without which no nation can be great or endure. It taught the rank and file to be loyal, and their leaders to sacrifice themselves for the led … in the hour of adversity and danger they closed their ranks and were true to one another.

Such words have a familiar ring. They remind us of Winston Churchill in England's "Finest Hour."[127] But they must remind us also of the Hussites. There is the same unflagging, vigorous, fighting spirit devoted to noble ends. But there is one important difference. The influence of those doughty Anglo-Saxon fighters was continuous. To generation after generation this heritage of freedom and democracy was bequeathed. But the dominance of the Hussite tradition and the ideals and principles of the Czech Brethren came to an end with the advent of the Habsburg overlordship in 1620. From that time on for three hundred years the Czechs, Slovaks and the other peoples in that sprawling empire had as their sole task obedience to the Emperor, accommodating themselves to imperial rules and regulations for the framing of which they had had no responsibility. For three hundred years the sense of duty and responsibility for the affairs of their own country lay dormant. Twenty years was too pitifully short a time to develop it to the strength that the crises demanded.

Time is needed in Czechoslovakia. Perhaps much time. Meanwhile a way must be found to school the people anew in stoutness of heart, in devotion to duty, in responsibility for the welfare of the people. Let no one think that such a task rests upon Czechoslovakia alone. In spite of its size, its wealth, its unbroken heritage of freedom and democracy there are many who believe that the United States of America is desperately in need of recovering a fighting faith in freedom. We often present the image, not of a nation crusading for freedom but one reluctant to accept the consequences of great power. People are warning us here that "The death pallor will indeed come over free society unless it can recharge the deepest sources of its

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[127] Winston Churchill – "The Second World War" (6 volumes), Houghton-Mifflin, Boston, 1948-1953; Volume II – "Their Finest Hour."

moral energy."[128] Time was when Walt Whitman was the most ebullient champion of American democracy.[129] But in his later years his words caused much soul-searching. He pondered the "Shallowness and miserable selfism of these crowds with all their minds so blank of high humanity and aspiration" and he saw people "with hearts of rags and souls of chalk." And he went on, "I have little hope of any man or any community of men that looks to some civil or military power to defend its vital rights. If we have it not in ourselves to defend what belongs to us, then the citadel and the heart of the towns are taken."

This is the challenge of our day. Confusion, prejudice, moral laxity are rife the world around. Materialism must pay heavy debts to discarded courage and faith and human understanding. We need to consult the simplicities once more, to see how man shocked and shuddering at the breakdown of his old beliefs and ideals can yet rescue these things of good and lovely report and replace them at the center of his intention and his aspiration for himself and his world. So may it be with the Czechoslovaks.

"Too long a sacrifice
Can make a stone of the heart.
O when may it suffice?"[130]

[128] Arthur Schlesinger, Jr. – "The Vital Center: The Politics of Freedom," Houghton Mifflin, Boston, 1949, p. 246.
[129] Walt Whitman (1819-1892) – "Leaves of Grass" published from 1855-1891.
[130] William Butler Yeats (1865-1939) – "Easter 1916," written in 1916, first published in 1920.

Introduction

The "Uncle from America" can be read as a story of one man's relationship to and work with people from a country other than his own. In the age of mass migration in many parts of the world, it is not unusual for a person to develop an interest in and a deep affection for another culture, nation or land. The establishment of such a bond is often influenced by one's ancestry, familial connections, or acquired through marriage. Kenneth Dexter Miller's affair with the Czech- and Slovak-speaking people was not due to any of the above factors. He was sent to Bohemia just before World War I by the Presbyterian Church as a freshly ordained seminary graduate to learn the Czech language, and become acquainted with Bohemia's history and culture. This was to enable him to serve as a Presbyterian minister to the many Czech-speaking immigrants forming settlements in American rural and urban areas.

The experience of this 25-year-old man began a relationship that continued to evolve for the rest of his life. Having no Bohemian ancestry, acquiring no relatives of Bohemian descent through his marriage to Ethel Prince, he managed to master the Czech language, and to develop a depth of knowledge of Czech culture and its outposts abroad that was highly unusual among his peers in the United States in the first half of the 20th century.

The following biographical essay aims to provide additional information that may be helpful in understanding the life of the author of "Uncle from America," and perhaps offer another perspective to supplement the autobiographical text presented in this volume. The sources for the biographical essay are identified in the footnotes and summarized at the end.

Czechoslovakia ceased to exist in 1992 with a split into two new independent countries: the Czech Republic and the Slovak Republic. However, the former designation and its derivatives (Czechoslovak, Czechoslovaks) are used throughout the biographical essay to reflect the way Kenneth Dexter Miller understood and used the terms which were commonly used during the time period covered in this volume.

Kenneth Dexter Miller

(b. April 27, 1887, Roselle, Union County, New Jersey – d. July 6, 1968, Livingston, Essex County, New Jersey, age 81)

Origins of the "Uncle from America" manuscript

In 1962, at the age of 75, Kenneth Dexter Miller (KDM) contacted Donald McGraw of the publishing house McGraw-Hill in New York regarding a manuscript he had begun to prepare as an account of his encounters with the people of Czechoslovakia over the past 50 years. The author describes the intended work as follows:

> My experiences with these people include: a year in the country (1912-13) while under Austrian rule studying the language and social backgrounds preparatory to work among them in the U.S.A.; a period of service among the Czechs and Slovaks in the U.S. becoming acquainted with all the larger settlements in our rural and industrial sections; a two-year experience in Russia and Siberia during World War I working with the Czechoslovak Legion; several extensive visits to the Czechoslovak Republic, once as President of American Relief for Czechoslovakia; long conversations both with T.G. and Jan Masaryk; two years' experience working with Czechoslovak refugees from communism, headquartering at Munich. During all this time I gathered a mass of information about the people, the story of which tragically culminated in the communist coup in 1948."
>
> I am in the midst of assembling all of this data, not with the intention of producing a scholarly history, but rather to record my personal impressions and experiences.
>
> All of this is in the beginning stage, but even now I think the advice of someone in the business as to whether a book such as I have in mind would be publishable, would be valuable.[131]

After further correspondence with the publisher's editors and after contacting several other publishing houses, the book was not accepted by any of them, having – according to most – little chances of "paying its way."[132] Perhaps it was too early then to attract enough attention from the publishers. A decade later, in 1972, a collection of letters written by another Y.M.C.A. secretary from Russia during WWI was published – Edward Heald's "Witness to Revolution: Letters from Russia 1916-1919," and yet another former secretary, Raymond Reitzel, published his autobiography including his years with the Y.M.C.A. in Russia at the same time in 1973 under the title "All In a Lifetime." It may be the occupation of Czechoslovakia by the Soviet Union in the late 1960s made the market more apt to "absorb enough copies." Having died six weeks before the August 1968 Soviet

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[131] Letter of April 25, 1962, KDM P 1:14.

[132] Another put it this way: "We have examined your manuscript, 'Uncle from America.' We found it interesting, but we are doubtful that the market would absorb enough copies to enable the publisher to make a profit, or even break even. This is regrettable." See correspondence with editors in KDM P 1:14 .

invasion, KDM was not able to shepherd his manuscript to publication during this period of increased interest in eastern European and Russian affairs.

The Czechoslovak Legion in Russia

The experiences of KDM with the Czechoslovak Legion in Russia are certainly the highlights of the present volume. It was undoubtedly an unforgettable and a much cherished experience for KDM himself. The decisive step that made it possible for KDM to go to Russia was taken over 90 years ago.

On the 21st of August, 1917, Kenneth Dexter Miller applied for a passport at a branch passport agency in New York City as "a native and loyal citizen of the United States" using the appropriate "form for native citizens"[133] as opposed to that for non-native citizens as the State Department required at that time. Later in his life, Miller was a magnificent example of how mutually enriching and stimulating encounters of native citizens with foreign-born immigrants and their cultures can be. This application for a passport was submitted in anticipation of a trip that was to become a profound and enriching experience in Miller's life.

On his way to the passport agency, Miller was accompanied by his brother Gardiner H. Miller of New York City, who swore before the clerk that he had personally known Kenneth for thirty years as a native citizen. This was not the first passport KDM had applied for as he had previously traveled overseas, namely to Bohemia in Europe in 1912, staying there for almost one year. This time he intended to return to the United States within 18 months after the completion of his trip "with the purpose of residing and performing the duties of citizenship therein." Japan and Russia were stated as the countries to be visited for the purpose of "Y.M.C.A. war work," and San Francisco as the port of departure on September 1, 1917, sailing on board the *S. S. Rembrandt.* The validity of the passport, originally set to expire on February 22, 1918, had to be extended by six months by the American Vice-Consul in Kiev, Ukraine on January 22, 1918, to August 22, 1918, and then again on August 22, 1918, by the American Vice-Consul in Yekaterinburg, Russia, by additional six months to February 22, 1919. And finally on March 20, 1919, Miller's passport was extended by the American Consul in Vladivostok, Russia, until September 20, 1919. On August 22, 1919, on Miller's return journey to the United States, his passport was stamped by the American Vice-Consul in Yokohama, Japan, before he sailed across the Pacific and arrived in San Francisco in September 1919, almost exactly two years after his departure in 1917.

[133] Duplicate copy of application form, KDM Papers, IHRC1553, Oversize portfolio 1.

According to the passport application form, at the age of 30 years, KDM was standing at 6 feet 2 and ½ inches, with "high" forehead, "grey" eyes (bespectacled), "straight" nose, "normal" mouth, "round" chin, "light" hair, "fair" complexion and "oval" face.

Childhood

With the exception of his sojourn in Bohemia in 1912-1913, Kenneth Dexter Miller spent the previous 30 years of his life mostly in the New York City area and in New Jersey. For information on his childhood, KDM provided a valuable source himself when he wrote down some of his memories in a text entitled "Our Backgrounds: The Miller and Prince Family Lines."[134]

In a brief foreword KDM acknowledges the link between one's age and one's interest in "climbing the family tree" but states as his main interest in recording his version of the family history "to pass on to my children and theirs a brief record of their family history so that they may know what lies behind them. For while they shall be judged by their fruits --- nevertheless roots have something to do with fruits." This allusion to the biblical verse is another reminder that KDM was a Christian minister (of the Presbyterian denomination). His faith was a major guiding factor throughout his life, never leading him, however, into the tenets of bigotry or narrow-mindedness that modern and postmodern skeptics often associate with religiosity. As will be seen in the following, KDM considered himself a "liberal" and, more importantly, took great intellectual pains to define for himself and others what the word "liberalism" meant to him and why.

KDM's grandfather James Miller (married to Mary Dexter) came to the United States from his native Ireland. As he was killed in the 1862 battle of Fair Oaks (Henrico County, Virginia) of the Civil War, his grandson never had the opportunity to spend time with his paternal grandfather. KDM's father, Charles Dexter Miller, born in Easton, Pennsylvania eventually became the head of Hopkins Dwyer and Co., cotton brokers, and was previously the head of the Cotton Exchange. He is remembered by KDM as an "invalid" (whose condition put an increasing burden on his wife Julia and daughter Helen) and a lover of ice cream. KDM was 16 when his father died in 1903. Charles' wife Julia (neé Hope) outlived

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[134] It is dated 1945 and was graciously offered by Kenneth Dexter Miller Jr. who had also re-typed the original manuscript in 1999 and supplied a number of explanatory notes. The paragraphs covering KDM's youth up to his years at Princeton are based on the eight-page document which has been added to KDM's papers at the IHRC (Box 3). Unless otherwise indicated, all quotes on the following two pages are from this document.

him by 35 years, and KDM developed a much closer relationship to her ("my association with her was very close, particularly in later years"), remembering her as "quiet, dignified and reserved, but a woman of strong convictions and some prejudices" and who "had great pride in the family, and followed the comings and goings of her 7 children and their affairs with meticulous interest and deep affection."

Through the maternal Hope side of the family, KDM was aware of its links to the oldest families of European descent in North America but never seemed to make much of it. His old American ancestry certainly did not prevent him from finding deep interest in and understanding for the most recent and contemporary immigrants to the U.S. during his lifetime. ("Through this line, the family genealogy goes back to Edward Fuller of the Mayflower, which makes any descendant eligible for the Mayflower Society, the Colonial Dames, or the Daughters of American Revolution, or the Sons of the American Revolution if they are interested in such organizations.")

KDM's maternal grandfather Aaron Dunham Hope (1817-1900) was a skilled entrepreneur at the time when the East Coast, and particularly New Jersey, witnessed the boom of railroad building and founded Hope's Express which was later absorbed by the American Railway Express company.

KDM's childhood was spent in Roselle, New Jersey, in a large 22-room house that the family owned on Fifth Avenue. It was not a life of material want, with three servants helping to make the household with seven children run smoothly. KDM recalls playing with siblings, especially older brother Emery who was closest to KDM in age, Kenneth being the youngest (after the death in infancy of Constance). Other siblings, starting with the oldest, included Gardiner Hope, James Alexander, Lucius Hopkins, Helen Clarkson and Hugh. With the exception of Gardiner, Helen and Emery, all were in college by the time of KDM's earliest memories. The absent siblings were to some degree substituted as partners in or objects of play by the two "negro" servants, Branch who took care of the garden (he was designated as the coachman but as KDM reminisces, "by my time, had no horses or carriages to care for, and as yet no automobiles) and William (cook and launderer). Then there was the Cockney-speaking Frank who took care of the cows.

The account of family life in the Miller household gives the impression of KDM's happy childhood including both the routine (going to school, church, helping with chores such as cutting the grass, raking the leaves, digging dandelions, picking fruit and running small errands in town) and the fun, pranks and leisure. ("Emery and I also dressed up as tramps and went around to the neighbors' backdoor begging food. We then relayed to the family the kind of hand-outs we got.") The family used to

spend summers on a farm at North Branch, New Jersey, where they rented a place to stay. The boys were able to spend some of their time playing tennis and other sports.

Schooling was administered first by relatives; Mrs. Miller's sister, "Aunt Bessie" ran a kindergarten or nursery in the Hope family house, later by a private school in nearby Roselle. Around the age of 10, KDM's next educational step became the Pingry School in Elizabeth, New Jersey. KDM also attended a dance school in the same town.

College years

During his years in Princeton, KDM was known to his classmates as "Dusty." KDM cherished his memories of the years spent at Princeton. In 1958, 50 years after graduation, 158 members of the 341-man-strong class were still living and a memorable reunion was organized, attended by over 70 classmates including KDM. The booklet[135] produced for this reunion proudly reports on the achievements of prominent class members, from the then Secretary of State John F. Dulles, to numerous lawyers, medical doctors, and corporate executives, to Robert Clothier, President of Rutgers University for nearly 20 years. These men studied at Princeton at the time when Woodrow Wilson was President of the University and KDM referred to himself later as a "student of and a great admirer of Wilson."[136] KDM graduated in 1908 with the degree of Bachelor of Arts.

The following year he continued his studies at Columbia University in New York City. He enrolled in the Law School class of 1911, however, only the 1908/1909 student directory lists him as a first-year student.[137]

At that time there was an agreement between Columbia University and the Union Theological Seminary allowing selected students from the Seminary to attend classes at Columbia and the two institutions maintained a close and cooperative relationship. When KDM attended classes at Columbia, the Union Theological Seminary was building a new, larger campus across the street from Columbia at

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[135] "50th Year Directory of the Class of 1908, Princeton University" prepared for the Class reunion on June 11-16, 1958 (KDM 1:21).

[136] As indicated in "Reminiscences of Thomas G. Masaryk" copy (dated March 7, 1953) of which is in KDM, 1: 4 and some of which made its way into "Uncle" as well – "Having been a student of Woodrow Wilson and a great admirer of Wilson I was interested in comparing these two figures." (p. 1)

[137] This information was kindly provided by Jocelyn Wilk of the Columbia University Archives.

Morningside Heights. The cornerstone was laid in the fall of 1908, and as a student at Columbia, KDM must have witnessed the rapidly progressing construction.

The next fall, in 1909, KDM entered the Union Theological Seminary, spending the first year at the old Seminary building at Park Avenue and 70th Street. In the fall of 1910, the Seminary moved to the new location at Broadway and 120th Street. The Seminary at that time was led by Francis Brown (served as president 1908-1916), a biblical scholar who emphasized high scholarly standards and the need for the institution to transform itself into more of a theological university while continuing to train candidates for Protestant ministry and remaining anchored in the Calvinist tradition of the Presbyterian and Congregational denominations.[138] At this institution, as it went through a vigorous period of its history (new campus, new president, high scholarly ambitions), KDM received the degree of Bachelor of Divinity, having completed "a full three years' course of theological study including the special requirements of the honor course of this seminary"[139] in May of 1912. The ordination took place shortly after graduation, on May 19, 1912 at the Madison Avenue Presbyterian Church at 73rd Street.[140]

Immigrant Fellow – First trip to Bohemia

The Presbyterian Church of the USA was then one of the active agents in the work with the "laboring masses," especially in New York City. In 1903, the Church's Board of Home Missions established the Workingmen's Department and charged it with service to the increasing numbers of workers employed by the growing American industry. As a large percentage of those workers were foreign born, the Church decided to train some of its pastors specially for ministry among immigrants. As part of this training, the candidates for such work were sent to the home countries of immigrants to become familiar with the language, history and culture of these newcomers to the United States.

Just a couple of months after his graduation, KDM was selected as an "Immigrant Fellow" by the Presbyterian Board of Home Missions in New York and sent to Bohemia for a year to study the people, their history, language and culture. Already in November, KDM found himself writing the first entries in his journal in

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[138] Handy, Robert T. – *A History of Union Theological Seminary in New York*, Columbia University Press, New York, 1987, pp. 118-130.

[139] Diploma dated May 14, 1912 (KDM P, Oversize portfolio 1).

[140] An invitation "to be present at the Ordination of Kenneth Dexter Miller to the Christian Ministry, Sunday evening May 19, at eight o'clock Madison Avenue Presbyterian Church, North East Corner of 73rd Street, New York" (KDM 1:26).

Bohemia where he stayed into the summer of 1913, ending his European sojourn with a stay in Slovakia (then known as Upper Hungary) in June 1913 before returning to the United States.

One of KDM's experiences during his stay in the Czech lands that would have significant consequences throughout his life was his meeting the family of Tomáš G. Masaryk, then a university professor at Prague who in 1918 became the first president of the newly established Czechoslovak Republic. In discussion sessions at the Masaryk apartment he also was introduced to Edvard Beneš, one of the closest associates of Masaryk in their efforts to gain independence for the country from Austria-Hungary. Beneš was to become a long-time Minister of Foreign Affairs and later president of the Republic as well. These encounters are described in vivid detail in KDM's own words in the opening chapters of "Uncle" and will certainly be of great interest to those who desire to learn about those prominent figures of Czech history from a new perspective.

Jan Hus Neighborhood House in New York City

After his return to New York in the summer of 1913, KDM, with his fresh knowledge of the Czech language and culture, joined the Jan Hus Neighborhood House run by the Presbyterian Church whose aim was to reach and serve Czech-speaking immigrants in Manhattan. KDM's role at the Neighborhood House was to direct its social and religious work.[141] The congregation had been established in 1874 by the community of Czech settlers on the Upper East Side of Manhattan. In 1880 it became the Jan Hus Presbyterian Church with Vincent Písek, who had grown up in the neighborhood as a child of immigrants, as its pastor.

At the Jan Hus neighborhood house, KDM became acquainted with Rev. Vincent Písek as well as with Charles Atherton, the Neighborhood House associate involved, among others, in the music programs. KDM later spent time with these two men in Siberia where Písek came to meet the spiritual needs of the Czechoslovak Legionnaires, and Atherton was, like KDM, a Y.M.C.A. foreign secretary assigned to the Legion.

Foreign Secretary of Y.M.C.A.

On June 15, 1917, a "Notice of Enrollment Under Military Law to Kenneth Dexter Miller at 351 East 74th Street" (the address of the Jan Hus Neighborhood

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[141] (In [auto?] biographical sketch printed at the beginning of his third book, *We Who Are America*, 1943). In 1925, in the biographical sketch in his second book, *Peasant Pioneers*, it is indicated that he was "in charge of the social and religious work of the House."

House where KDM resided) from Assembly District No. 20, Borough of Manhattan, was sent to KDM reading:

Take notice: That pursuant to the provisions of the Military Law of the State of New York, you have been duly enrolled as liable to service in the Militia of the State. [142]

KDM decided to get involved in the world war conflict and applied for a position as Y.M.C.A. foreign secretary. At the same time, he was eager to try something different than what he had been doing at the Jan Hus Neighborhood House. Now an opportunity to do so arose.[143] The Y.M.C.A. at that time was recruiting a number of secretaries for service on various fronts of the war, including the eastern front in Russia. The Russian effort was rapidly being developed by the Y.M.C.A. following a mission to Russia sent there by the United States government in May 1917. The Y.M.C.A. Secretary General John Mott (1865-1955, Nobel Peace Prize, 1946) was asked by President Wilson to join the mission. Upon his return in early August, Mott, having seen the ample opportunity for work in Russia, promoted an aggressive campaign to recruit candidates and send them as Y.M.C.A. foreign secretaries to the country as quickly as possible.

KDM must have applied as one of the first candidates after Mott's return, for already on August 16, 1917, a letter was sent to KDM from Philip A. Schwartz, Y.M.C.A. Secretary for Russian Candidates, inviting him to a conference with prospective secretaries:

Dr. Mott wants to meet all the candidates for War Work with the Russian troops at a conference which will be held on Monday morning August 20th at 9:30, at 25 Madison Avenue, 19th floor.

Several hundred men will be needed and we must secure as rapidly as possible every qualified man who may be in a position to meet this emergency. Will you not arrange to attend this conference of prospective secretaries, at the expense of the National War Work Council? Bring with you your birth certificate and be prepared to sail with the first contingent on September 1st, if approved by the committee. If you cannot arrange your

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[142] KDM P 1:26.

[143] In a letter to Ethel Prince Anderson written on the train between Cheliabinsk and Ufa in Russia on November 4, 1918, KDM reminisces about his work at Jan Hus before his departure in 1917 in the following words: "Frankly, I like living and working in a foreign country – perhaps it is because my experience with the work at home was not a particularly happy one. Certainly I should much prefer being abroad to being at Jan Hus – in fact I shall not go back there under any circumstances as long as things are as they are."

affairs at such short notice, come anyhow with the prospect of leaving at a later date. This conference will probably be the only opportunity to hear Dr. Mott present the situation in Russia. It is an unparalleled opportunity for Christian patriotic service and we trust that you may hold yourself ready to go. Please wire reply.

Very cordially yours,
Philip A. Schwartz
Secretary for Russian Candidates[144]

KDM did indeed receive an appointment to go to Russia as a Y.M.C.A. foreign secretary. He was one of 200,000 who during WWI applied for service under the Y's National Council of War Work to serve those affected by the war at home and abroad. Almost 26,000 were selected, half of those to work abroad. Miller was thus a part of a large effort by the Y.M.C.A. to provide assistance to those in need. There were 125 secretaries operating in European Russia alone, and an additional 100 in Siberia and the Far East during the war-time.[145] As part of the War Work effort, the Y.M.C.A. recruited 1,470 entertainers, "including many of the best-known artists of the day"[146]. (Miller in his "Uncle" mentions as one of these artists, Charles Atherton, a former professional baseball player who (according to a history of the Jan Hus Parish[147]) met Pastor Vincent Písek of the New York Jan Hus neighborhood house around 1903 while playing the piano in a bar.

On August 25, 1917, KDM signed a contract with the Y.M.C.A. The contract stipulated the following conditions:

- salary of $100 per month starting October 1, 1917
- reasonable traveling expenses, subject to audit, to be met by the War Work Council, including transportation, Pullman if necessary, and meals en route
- continuance in this service for duration of war, provided services are required for that period by the War Work Council[148]

In his journal, started on August 26, 1917, KDM records the four-day train ride from New York begun on August 27, 1917, to Chicago and further west through Omaha, across Wyoming and then the Sierras to San Francisco. KDM is generally

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[144] KDM P 1:18 (In the head of the letter F.C. Atherton listed as member of "Committee").
[145] Hopkins, C. Howard – *History of the Y.M.C.A. in North America*, Association Press, New York, 1951, pp. 492-493.
[146] Ibid. 492.
[147] JHNH web site, 05/12/27, www.janhus.org. The Y.M.C.A. spent more than $152 million on its war efforts.
[148] KDM P 1:20.

more interested in his fellow passengers than in the scenery, except when struck by the beauty of the mountains in California. Also, after touring San Francisco before the departure of the ship, KDM writes (on September 2) "S.F. most beautiful city I have seen in U.S.A. – fine air." After having to wait several days for clearance due to concerns about steel cargo and the current embargos, the ship left the harbor on September 6.

It took the *S.S. Rembrandt* 20 days to sail to Yokohama in Japan via Honolulu, Hawaii, and several days were spent in Japan (including visits to Tokyo and Kyoto) before finally arriving in Vladivostok on October 8. (KDM records in his journal that "V. – dirty city – but good to see white men + Slavic faces again."[149]) During the voyage KDM spent much time studying Russian and reading Tolstoy's *Anna Karenina*.

In Russia, 1917

After unpacking and settling all paperwork in Vladivostok, KDM took his first ride on the Trans-Siberian Railway, from the Pacific coast of Russia to St. Petersburg on the Baltic Sea. It was a total of nine and a half thousand miles which he traveled in 11 days, leaving Vladivostok on Thursday, October 18 and arriving in St. Petersburg on Monday, October 29. At this time he did not know that in a few months he would be back on the same railroad and become very familiar with it over the course of the following 18 months. Neither could he foresee the dimensions of the events that were to unfold in St. Petersburg in a few days. While on the train, KDM studied Russian and read Pushkin.

On November 1, 1917, less than a week before the Bolshevik Revolution, the U.S. Ambassador to Russia, David R. Frances, at "Petrograd" issued a "Certificate of Identification" for KDM as "an accredited agent of the International Committee Young Men's Christian Associations of North America."[150]

Immediately after his arrival in St. Petersburg KDM sought out the Czechs connected with the activities of the Czechoslovak National Council in exile which was working toward political independence for the Czechs and Slovaks after the war. He had brought names and contact information with him from America obtained from his plentiful Czech American friends and acquaintances. In observing the local conditions and developments, KDM wrote:

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[149] KDM P 3:3.

[150] KDM P 1:20.

Bolsheviks correspond to our Socialists, pacifists + IWW. Some sincere but used by Germany. My pacifism fast going + want to kick the loafers. Conservative element seemingly growing stronger, but constant danger of: 1. Bolshevik demonstration, 2. of separate peace, 3. or restoration of old regime.[151]

It was during these momentous days on the eve of the Bolshevik Revolution in St. Petersburg (Nov. 7, 1917) that KDM met again with Tomáš G. Masaryk. And it was during these days that there materialized the opportunity for KDM to serve the Czechoslovak rather than the disorganized and disappearing Russian troops. He gives his own account of these meetings in Chapter 7 of the "Uncle from America."

When he arrived in European Russia at the end of October 1917, KDM was not the first or the only American working in the country as a Y.M.C.A. secretary. The Y.M.C.A. first established its Russian office in St. Petersburg in 1906 under the name of "Mayak" (Lighthouse). As early as the opening months of 1916, there were 15 secretaries working in the war prisoner camps under the Y.M.C.A. War Prisoners' Aid program. Additionally, they organized soldier clubs for Russian troops in cities along the Trans-Siberian Railway including Omsk, Irkutsk and Chita.[152]

KDM left St. Petersburg for Kiev on November 6, 1917, after 9 p.m., only hours before the Revolution broke out in the city. A letter of November 5, 1917, written in Kiev by P. Maxa of the Czechoslovak National Council in exile, acting on a communication from his associates in St. Petersburg, to "all committees, officers and volunteers of the Czechoslovak Army" (Legion) introduces and recommends KDM:

Mr. Miller from New York, representative of the Young Men Christian Association.

Mr. Miller is bringing to us both spiritual and material assistance of the great Allied nation of Americans, he will establish for our troops tea rooms with magazines, lectures and cinema, he will secure small objects of daily need and generally he will make every effort to prove to the Czechoslovak soldiers that the American nation is with us and with all who are fighting for freedom of humankind.

Please accept Mr. Miller everywhere as a representative of a great friendly state and give him every possible support.[153]

At the time of KDM's arrival, Edward T. Heald (in Russia since September 1916) was stationed in Kiev (having previously operated a Y.M.C.A. office and a hut at the

[151] KDM P, 3: Journal III, October 29, 1917.
[152] Reitzel, Raymond – *All In a Lifetime*, 1973, p. 127.
[153] KDM P 1:18.

front near Minsk for a month).[154] KDM's journal entries from this time suggest that he still did not have a clear idea whether he would be assigned to work with the Czechoslovaks. Almost the entire month of November was spent in uncertainty and anxiety caused by the fighting between the Bolsheviks and the Kerensky government forces in Russia's major cities and in the Ukrainian Kiev. The area around Kiev also saw the involvement of the Ukrainian units engaged in a struggle for independence. According to some rumors of the time, they were supported by the Germans who were near and advancing on Minsk. Two entries from the journal for November 11 and 12 respectively illustrate the situation in Kiev: "Right in the midst of anarchy + revolution. It is great to be here." And: "No one knows what is going on – who is shooting or at whom – perfect anarchy." KDM is reading G. B. Shaw's *Man and Superman*. [155]

Joining the Czechoslovak Legion near Kiev

As the uncertainty and work-less waiting dragged on, the ever-active and eager-to-work KDM was becoming frustrated and his gloom was interrupted only by letters from Ethel Prince ("Nell") and family. He was spending much time with E. Heald and his wife.[156] Finally on November 23, his old acquaintance, Charles Atherton from the Jan Hus Neighborhood House, arrived as a newly appointed Y.M.C.A. secretary. On November 24, KDM met with Prof. Masaryk who was in Kiev, and as more news from the various fronts and negotiations were again becoming available, things started to move. After days spent buying supplies, he and Atherton departed

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[154] E.T. Heald recorded KDM's arrival on Sunday, November 11: "Kenneth Miller arrived from Petrograd Friday. He had been three days and nights on the trip that normally takes 36 hours. He had left Petrograd before the fighting began there. He came with the first party of secretaries from America. A second party of 25 secretaries almost caught up with the first party. They are bringing movies, phonographs, films, and records. Yesterday I went with Miller to visit Professor Maxa, who is the leader of the Czechs here. Miller spent a year in Bohemia before the war, learned the Czech language, and got acquainted with many of the leading Czechs who are now here in Russia. He brought over letters of introduction from the American Czechs to the key men here in Russia. (…) He is right at home among the men here." Heald, Edward – *Witness to Revolution: Letters from Russia 1916-1919*, 1972, Kent State University Press, p. 173.

[155] KDM P 3: Journal III, Nov. 11, 12, 1917.

[156] "Heald – a typical Y.M.C.A. man – nice + efficient – but Y.M.C.A." Mrs. Heald struck him as possessing the "inability to adapt herself to foreign ways of doing things and foreign point of view" – the opposite of which seems to have been an important and desirable part of interacting with another culture to KDM. (KDM P 3: Journal III, Nov. 10 and 11, 1917.

for the field. The Czechoslovak troops were dispatched nearer to the front on December 5, 1917, very much to KDM's delight. He got busy at once setting up a tea room, arranging music sessions (using a gramophone), film showings and English language lessons for the Czechoslovak soldiers with whom he became a great friend from the first moments. As other secretaries reported as well, the Czechoslovak units were islands of order, discipline, and politeness amidst the confusion, disorganization, and the general shortage of basic items of daily need widespread in the country devastated by the war and the progressing revolution.

Meanwhile in New York, on January 9, 1918 (and again on February 22), a second (and third) card were sent to KDM's address from the U.S. War Department classifying KDM as Class V(5) B, for military service.[157] However, he was deep in Russia's Ukrainian interior, in the midst of the war action serving alongside the Czechoslovak Legion. (His work included occasional pastoral duties. Later that month, KDM was called back to Kiev to officiate at the marriage of one of the Y.M.C.A. secretaries from the U.S. who had met his future wife on the Trans-Siberian Railway.[158])

On February 9, 1918 (January 27, according to the Julian calendar used in Russia prior to the introduction of the Gregorian calendar on February 14, 1918), a letter to KDM was written by Tomáš G. Masaryk (Chairman of the Czechoslovak National Council in exile) in Kiev responding to a plan Miller had proposed for the Y.M.C.A.'s work and program, both with the troops and with young people in post-war Czechoslovakia.

Dear Mr. Miller, your plan is good. After the war, whatever the result, America will be closer to us, and dearer than before and that could be made good use of. There will be financial means as well.

As usual in education and similar enterprises in general, individual points are not decisive, what matters is the spirit, the direction.

I am offering for consideration:

1) Add philosophical to religious lectures (Philosophical and religious)

2) According to experiences elsewhere, common accommodations for young people are of little good. Administration of such institutes becomes barrack-like, monotonous. But it could be tried. Besides a house for meetings, one or two more could be rented and turned into student dormitories. Eventually a different one could be purchased or built. It would also be possible to rent apartments in various houses and rotate them – that would allow both oversight and freedom.

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[157] KDM P 1:26.

[158] KDM P 3: Journal III, Jan. 20, 1918.

3) Please note: in our country, "student" means also gymnasium (high-school) students and secondary school boys in general.

I wish you were a good prophet – I am afraid we will be going home later than you estimate. I have been away from my family for three years now – in my old age a considerable sacrifice, but it will not be all in vain and we all have to bring sacrifices. And sacrifice is equally difficult to everyone. I am therefore at peace, as long as we can accomplish not to lose unnecessarily any of our dear boys. It is not easy to sail through all the many cliffs. Cordially, T. Masaryk [159]

On the Trans-Siberian Railway

After four months with the Czechoslovak Legion in the Kiev area, KDM followed the troops ordered to retreat and begin their journey east across Siberia to Vladivostok so that they could join their fellow fighters on the western front in France. In mid-March he made a trip to Moscow to consult regarding his further plans with the Y.M.C.A. office there. When he arrived he found that everyone had left for a conference of all Y.M.C.A. secretaries in Russia which was held in Samara by the newly appointed Senior National Secretary for Russia, Ethan T. Colton. The conference had been called to decide the next direction in the Y.M.C.A. war work in the country in light of the new, post-November 7th situation. This was an important gathering recorded also by Heald and Reitzel. Some secretaries decided to go back to America either to serve in the U.S. armed forces or for personal reasons, others received their new placements in Russia. KDM was able to secure the consent of Y.M.C.A. headquarters to his proposal for expanded work with the Czechoslovaks involving additional secretaries stationed with individual regiments. After a period of confusion, following the Bolshevik revolution and the complete disintegration of the Russian army with which the Y.M.C.A. secretaries were originally intended to work, the Samara conference put the Y.M.C.A. work in Russia back on track. When E.T. Colton later recalled the turmoil in Russia in the months preceding the conference in Samara, he actually used the example of KDM (although he did not name him) to depict the complex experiences that he and some of the secretaries went through:

All that took place in me cannot be reduced to language. The experience could hardly fail to either be expansive or to break one down. Here came exposure to a fourth of the continent; to a great Slav people with strange folk-ways; to the largest Eastern Church with its highly ritualistic worship at the other pole from my simple Methodist upbringing, yet mystically appealing; and withal to heaving foundations bringing down the whole political,

[159] KDM P 1:18.

economic and social order. One probably has to be tossed around in such a thoroughgoing ideological earthquake to more than suspect the rethinking it induces. A young Minister of real parts in my team who became so jostled from his religious bearings asked to be excused from conducting a devotional service. With time he found spiritual security, came back to a successful New York suburban pastorate, and later headed the principal all-Protestant organization in the metropolis.[160]

KDM as well as many other secretaries in town for the conference remained in Samara for a month. He quickly re-joined the Czechoslovaks stationed there at the time and began his work and life on the railroad tracks as is described in "Uncle." In mid-April, still in Samara, he wrote, "headquarters at the cars – but living up town as the bed bugs drove me out."[161] The plans for the next moves of the troops, now totaling fifty to sixty thousand and scattered between Kursk and Vladivostok, were still unclear. KDM records varying news received from various sources at this time suggesting once going out of Russia through Korea, then – as a result of pressure from the French – through the Arctic ports of Murmansk and Archangelsk, then again through Vladivostok and sailing via the Panama Canal or maybe via San Francisco and continuing across the United States and the Atlantic. Toward the end of April, the general expectation was that during the month of May, the majority of the troops would have arrived in Vladivostok ready to sail for France. Meanwhile, KDM was busy at work with the troops, ordering supplies, giving English language lessons and fixing up his train car. Sometimes his duties included those of a pastor:

> All of the men around the station – i.e. Czechs – fine to me in every way.... Called to officiate at a funeral of a private who died in the hospital here. Had TB + was wounded at Bachmac + had to have his leg amputated. Just simple pinebox in a peasant's wagon, a procession of izvozchiks [cabmen] + guard of honor. Cemetery all mud + dilapidation – simple wooden crosses – simple prayer. They all sang 'Kde domov můj' [Where is my home']. Life + wife + 3 children – so far off – very impressive.
>
> Finally, on April 14, echelons began coming thru – gave me a lot of work for all wanted something – but did not get much for I hadn't much to give. Great boys.[162]

On April 21, KDM and Atherton travelled west to Penza where KDM joined the Third Regiment set to leave for Vladivostok in the next few days. KDM left Penza

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[160] E. T. Colton – *Memoirs*, p. 88. This spiritual struggle is absent in KDM's Journals or letters to his fiancé.

[161] KDM P 3: Journal III, April 6-16, 1918

[162] Ibid.

on April 24 (KDM records: "off at 8:30 p.m. – for Vladivostok") and the train continued east through Samara again and Ufa through the Ural Mountains into Cheliabinsk on April 29th, a major railroad junction, where a large number of the Czechoslovak soldiers had gathered awaiting clearance by the Bolshevik authorities to continue on their trip. And again the "Dope is that we are going via Archangelsk which upsets my plans," recorded KDM in his Journal on May 9th, still in Cheliabinsk.

The month of May in Cheliabinsk proved to be a crucial episode in the journey of the Legion (for details see Appendix 1) and KDM would remain in the region, moving on the railroad between Yekaterinburg, Cheliabinsk and Omsk for the next ten months.

When KDM would later describe his engagement with the Legion in miscellaneous autobiographical sketches, he would often state that he "had been in charge of the Y.M.C.A.'s war work with the Czechoslovak Legion in Russia." A confirmation of those words can be found in a letter of April 4, 1918, from E. C. Peters, Senior Secretary, at the Russian National Office of Y.M.C.A. Army and Navy Department in Moscow (actually written in Samara at the conference of Y.M.C.A. secretaries):

> To the Secretaries and other representatives of the National War Work Councils of the United States and France:
>
> "Mr. Kenneth Miller, the bearer of this letter is the Secretary in charge of the work of the American Associations on behalf of the Checo-Slovak contingent traveling between Russian and another fighting front. In this capacity he represents the Russia National Organization and he and his associates are entitled to receive your full confidence and cooperation. I know that these will be forthcoming promptly.[163]

It appears that he gained that position after months of excellent work, having been gradually appointed to the positions of district secretary for the Western Siberia region and eventually oversaw the entire Y.M.C.A. work with the Czechoslovaks from Samara to Vladivostok.[164] In reality, however, each of the secretaries, usually

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[163] KDM P 1:20.

[164] The Y.M.C.A. developed a complex structure of departments and secretaries that seems to have been modified frequently, as the senior secretaries in charge came and went. Due to the vast distances and unstable communications channels (couriers, mail and cables), things were often viewed and interpreted differently in western Siberia and in Vladivostok, with some inevitable power struggles. Although Miller was appointed as in charge of the Czechoslovak work in April 1918 at Samara by Peters (with the consent of E. T. Colton), Heald who

working independently in remote areas of thousands of square miles, had to make their decisions quickly and mostly in cooperation with the officers of the Czechoslovak Legion.[165]

His work sometimes gave KDM an opportunity to explore entirely new and somewhat exotic areas such as sausage making and bakery operation in field conditions, activities cherished when later recalled. A document dated February 15, 1919, shows an inventory of items from the Sausage Factory transferred by KDM to his successor S. M Keeny. It includes "meat, ham smoke-dried, ham salted, guts salted, guts dried, salt, sulphur, twine, pepper, garlic, spirit, sausage – all valued at 99,550 rubles – over 500 poods of meat."[166] Adventures of this sort occasionally found their way into reports published in American newspapers. KDM would send his reports intended for publication to his brother Gardiner in New York who then dealt with the publishers. The following article appeared in a newspaper in Charleston, West Virginia, reporting on KDM's sausage factory in Cheliabinsk under the title "American Runs Sausage Factory in Bohemia – Former Y.M.C.A. Worker knows how to please Czech Army":

Cheliabinsk, Russia, Feb. 20. – Kenneth Miller, formerly head of the John Huss [*sic*] settlement house at New York City, is now directing an American Young Men's Christian Association enterprise at Cheliabinsk which is greatly appreciated by the Czecho-Slovak troops. Having lived in Bohemia he knows what best pleases the Czech army and so he

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(along with his wife) moved to Vladivostok in April 1918 reports that while in Japan for five weeks where they went immediately after their arrival (his wife then remained in Japan before returning to America without her husband) he "got orders (from the Y.M.C.A. New York office) to return to Vladivostok and take charge of the army work for the Czechoslovak troops." On May 6, Heald reports that he was asked by the Senior National Secretary for Russia Ethan Colton (who was at the conference in Samara at the time) "to take charge of the work for the Czechs until Kenneth Miller arrives" (in Vladivostok). Heald, 1972: p.206 and 209. When Sidney Phelps (1875-1961) replaced Ethan Colton (1872-1970) in the position of the National Senior Secretary of all work throughout Russia in August 1918, he re-organized the structure of districts and secretaries and KDM was put in charge of the Ufa district with Cheliabinsk as the headquarters in October 1918. (Sidney Phelps Papers, Y.M.C.A. Archives, Y-37-3, Box 568, Folder "Correspondence – Mary Phelps, 1918-1919.") And finally, on December 29, 1918, Heald, now stationed at Omsk in charge of the Omsk district, reports that "Miller has received his official appointment from Vladivostok as Head of the Czech Y.M.C.A. expedition, and they have authorized three other secretaries to accompany him." Heald, 1972: p. 283.

[165] See the opening paragraph of Appendix 2.

[166] KDM P 1:20 (1 pood = approximately 35 pounds).

established a sausage factory and bakery. The sausage factory is turning out tons of sausage and does a business of 300,000 rubles monthly. The work is done by twenty-five German and Austrian prisoners.

"Every day the bakery is making eight thousand rolls so popular in Prague. Everything is sold at cost. In this practical manner, Mr. Miller has "made good" with the Bohemians and people generally. It was at Cheliabinsk that the Czecho-Slovak troops inaugurated their campaign against the Bolsheviki and Magyars.[167]

When the World War ended in October 1918, the Czechoslovak soldiers as well as the Y.M.C.A. secretaries began to think more seriously about the post-war era in the new Czechoslovak republic as the time of their return approached. The Czechoslovak soldiers were still isolated in the far-off regions of Siberia engaging in battles with the Bolsheviks, holding the Trans-Siberian Railway and hoping to return to Europe soon. KDM was planning to travel with the troops on their journey home to Prague before departing for America from Europe. He was also seriously contemplating the possibility of continuing his work for the Y.M.C.A. in the newly established Czechoslovak Republic.

As early as December 1918, he wrote of his intentions to his mother:

Already we are making plans for the contingency of the Czechs leaving for home – which we understand is likely to be in the course of two to three months. There are seven or eight of us who will want to go. I am to lead the group and Story, who has left now for America, is to make a definite proposition that I be appointed National Secretary for Bohemia.... I have told them that I would undertake it only tentatively, leaving the definite decision until I reach America – I would leave for home as soon after our arrival in Prague as possible – staying only long enough to see that some sort of work is organized there. There are many reasons why I could not decide on any permanent proposition for work in Bohemia until I had been home. I am not willing to throw in my lot with the Y.M.C.A. in peace time without a frank talk with the head men as to policies, principles, etc. Furthermore, I am not by any means willing to leave the immigration work, without at least seeing what opportunities for service the Church has to offer now."

Then there are personal reasons why I can make no decision as to future plans until I have been home – for, for some time past, my thoughts and plans for the future have been pretty well wrapped up with those of another's – and that no other than Ethel Prince! I know it will not be altogether a surprise to you to know of our love and decision to share the future together.[168]

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[167] KDMP 1:25 (Undated newspaper clipping, possibly from 1919 or late 1918.

[168] Dated December 10, 1918, KDM P, Oversize portfolio 1.

That KDM's tentative plans to become Y.M.C.A.'s National Secretary for Bohemia found their way to the organization's "head men" is indicated by the following letter to KDM of April 15, 1919, addressed to the care of American Consulate, Y.M.C.A., Vladivostok, Russia, from C.V. Hibbard, Y.M.C.A. Associate General Secretary, New York:

Mr. Colton has shown me your report letter under date of Jan. 6th and the report of your lecture tour from Jan. 20th to Feb. 15th. I do not hesitate to say that these are among the most interesting reports that ever came under my observation. Someone ought to write the story of the Czechs in Siberia and in European Russia, it cannot be questioned but that you and your associates which you organized rendered an inestimable service in maintaining the morale of the Czechs under circumstances when almost any troops in the world would have gone to pieces. I like particularly the way you handle the question of supplies from the Cheliabinsk base when you were wholly cut off from the outside world. The financial report of your canteen activities is sufficient evidence of the magnitude of the operations and the efficiency of the administration. I would not have dreamed that so important a piece of work could be carried through with so little loss.

You raise the question of work for the Czechs after they return to Bohemia. If you have not already heard more directly from Prague you will be interested to know that we already have secretaries there who have gone from France and Italy with the Czech troops. The question of the permanent American national representative in Bohemia has not yet been settled but if you yourself could give the next few years to work in Bohemia you are one of the first men to whom we would look for a position among the leaders. I hope you will keep in touch with men among the soldiers who have developed a capacity for Association work and leadership in order that their invaluable training and experience may be conserved for work on a peace basis. There is one serious question which you ought always to bear in mind in connection with peace time work in Bohemia, namely, the funds which have been secured for the war work of the Association are not available for permanent peace work. We can properly use such funds during the period of demobilization of men who have been in the army but that work must soon draw to a close. Undoubtedly in the autumn of this year an effort will be made to secure funds for permanent work in Bohemia and other fields. The success of these efforts at that time will in large measure determine the proportion of our work in Bohemia and elsewhere.

"What you have said about the religious situation in Bohemia seems to me very similar to what I have heard from the Poles. Certainly the difficulties to which both these people have been submitted call for the utmost in patience and sympathy from every true Christian. If centuries of oppression and persecution have led them to feel that the church and Christianity are merely instruments of political oppression then we, as Christians, ought to

be willing to give years of patient service to reveal to these same people that the essence of Christianity is brotherly love and mutual service.[169]

In March 1919, KDM made a trip to Vladivostok to have his passport extended by the American Consul for the last time, and after consultations with the Y.M.C.A. headquarters in Vladivostok he re-joined the Third Regiment ("his" regiment) which was at the time stationed at Irkutsk on Lake Baikal. He remained in Irkutsk for three months until July when he undertook his last trip to Vladivostok (through Harbin in Manchuria).

July 1919 found KDM in the midst of preparations for his return to America. As a number of "Thank you" and "Good bye" letters and cards from the Czechoslovak soldiers sent to him in the closing months of his Siberian sojourn indicate, he was to be missed dearly by the soldiers who had found a generous and kind "uncle from America" in him. It was almost a year since the World War officially ended; KDM had nearly two years of service in the field behind him. The prospect of marrying Ethel Prince (whom he had met before his departure and with whom he had maintained correspondence throughout his years in Russia) was most likely one of the main reasons for his increasing desire to return.

Return to the United States, 1919

Finally, in August he was officially released from Y.M.C.A. war work and his way home was cleared. On August 14, 1919, a letter was sent to KDM from G.S. Phelps, Senior National Secretary for Russia at the Y.M.C.A. in Russia Headquarters in Vladivostok:

> I write this formal release for you to return to America, in view of the circumstances which you have urged upon me in our recent conversation. I cannot too strongly state my own personal appreciation of the splendid service which you have rendered to our movement in Russia and Siberia. You have the love and confidence of every man upon our staff in Vladivostok, as well as of every secretary serving under you in the Czech army. Your statesmanship and splendid leadership have made our Czech service the most successful and most satisfactory work which our movement has done in the Russian Empire. You may feel assured that you carry with you our highest esteem and our best wishes wherever you go.
>
> I sincerely hope that you may be Divinely led to find your life work in the Association service for the Czecho-Slovak people. It will give us great satisfaction indeed if it should

[169] KDM P 1:18 (Colton had been called to serve at the Y.M.C.A. New York Headquarters from Russia in the summer of 1918.)

eventuate that, after counseling with our leaders in New York, you should think it wise to return to Siberia to help in the winter campaign which is probably before us.

Wishing you a bon voyage, in which all of our staff would heartily join, I am Faithfully yours,[170]

As it turned out, KDM did not join the troops on their return journey to Prague (some sailed through the Suez Canal to France and others eventually went back home the long way, across the Pacific, the United States and the Atlantic) but sailed back to America from Japan at the end of August. As late as May 1919,[171] he anticipated continuing all the way to Prague with the Czech troops. On July 1 in Irkutsk he still estimated that he would leave Russia with the first regular military transports in October and November (the transports of the sick and injured had already been under way, the last Czechoslovak units left Vladivostok as late as April 1920). But things took a quick turn once he had arrived in Vladivostok. The Y.M.C.A. headquarters was initially reluctant to approve Miller's departure. It took an intervention of Dr. Vincent Písek of the Jan Hus House to convince Sidney Phelps who was at the time in charge of the Y.M.C.A. Russian operations to agree. (Pastor Písek had just arrived in Vladivostok to visit the Czechoslovak troops along the Trans-Siberian Railway, accompanied by Charles Atherton who had made another trip across the Pacific, having returned to America after a year of service the previous summer of 1918.)

After his late August to early September crossing of the Pacific and a train ride from San Francisco to New York, he returned to his work at the Jan Hus Neighborhood House as associate minister and director of the House. This arrangement was made under the auspices of the Board of Home Missions of the

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[170] KDM P 1:18; Another communication from Phelps a few days later conferred upon KDM the military honors of the American Expeditionary Forces stationed in Siberia at the time. "August 21, 1919 – The American Y.M.C.A., Army & Navy Department, in Vladivostok, Certificate – "In accordance with authority vested in me by the Commanding General of the AEF in Siberia I certify that Kenneth D. Miller having served as secretary in Siberia from August 21, 1918 to August 21, 1919 is authorized to wear two gold service stripes in conformity with army regulations. G.S. Phelps, Senior National Secretary for Russia (KDM 1:26).

[171] In a circular letter (titled "Dope Sheet") to other secretaries working with the Czechoslovak troops, he wrote on May 7, 1919 in Irkutsk: "Personally, I just had to change my mind about going away, for I hadn't the heart to leave these men still in Siberia, and now I am going to stick it out to Prague no matter how long it takes; and I wish you would all do the same."

Presbyterian Church.[172] KDM continued to develop educational and cultural programs in cooperation with Pastor Vincent Písek and Charles Atherton, sometimes incorporating in them their experiences from Siberia.[173] KDM's primary allegiance, though, seems to have been to the Presbyterian Board of Home Missions, and for a while he also worked for the Federal Council of Churches.[174]

On April 27, 1920, KDM was married to Ethel Prince at the First Presbyterian Church in Yonkers, New York.[175] After the wedding the couple moved to 11 West 47th Street in Manhattan, and during the following winter they moved again, this time to 180 North Broadway.[176]

In 1921, KDM began to work on his first book - "The Czechoslovaks in America" - utilizing his pre-war experiences in the Czech and Slovak lands as well as his progressively deepening knowledge of the people and their cultures to which his war service with the Czechoslovak Legion contributed in a significant way. In the fall of 1921, KDM (as a representative of the General Assembly of the Church to Churches in Europe[177]) along with his wife embarked upon an extended trip to Europe. For the first time, KDM visited the young Czechoslovak Republic, having made no small contribution to the efforts during the world war aimed at gaining the

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[172] In 1922, he is identified on the title page of his first book as "Associate Director of City and Immigrant Work, Board of Home Missions, Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A, and Director of the John Hus Neighborhood House, New York City."

[173] Legionnaires' songs were included in the Christmas Program of the House according to an undated program booklet, possibly from the early 1920s (Písek, Atherton and Miller listed as members of the Program Committee) KDM P 1:26.

[174] In 1943, a biographical sketch in his *We Who Are America* describes the time between Y.M.C.A. in Russia and KDM's ministry in Madison, New Jersey (starting in 1928) in these words: "Upon his return to America Mr. Miller became associated with the Presbyterian Board of National Missions and worked among Slavic populations for two years. In the early twenties he made several prolonged visits to Europe for the purpose of studying religious conditions and of promoting a program of reconstruction and relief among the churches there on behalf of American religious bodies. He served for a time as a member of the staff of the Federal Council of Churches in charge of relations with the churches in Europe.

[175] "Mrs. George Seelye Prince requests the honor of your presence at the marriage of her daughter Ethel Anderson to the Reverend Kenneth Dexter Miller on Tuesday, April 27 at half after seven o'clock at the First Presbyterian Church in Yonkers, New York" (KDM 1:21). Governor and Mrs. Alfred Smith were invited but declined to attend, "regretting exceedingly." (KDM P 1:21)

[176] KDM P 1:23.

[177] See footnote 45.

nation's independence from Austria-Hungary. His contribution along with those of other Y.M.C.A. secretaries was acknowledged by the Czechoslovak government by awarding them the Czechoslovak Cross of War.[178] On February 17, 1922, the Millers were guests to a dinner party at the summer seat of the Czechoslovak President, Tomáš G. Masaryk, at the Lány Chateau in Bohemia.[179]

The Millers also visited other countries of central and eastern Europe. Some of KDM's observations from this travel are reflected in his second book *Peasant Pioneers: An Interpretation of the Slavic Peoples in the United States* when he outlined the cultural backgrounds and histories of the various immigrant groups in the U.S. originating in the countries of the visited region.

Having returned from Europe in May of 1922, the Millers moved to 81 Locust Hill in Yonkers, New York, where they welcomed to the world their first child, Kenneth Dexter Jr., in the summer of 1922.[180] The same year, the final work on KDM's first book was completed and *The Czechoslovaks in America* was published by the George H. Doran Company in New York as part of the "New American Series" intended to cover a wide range of immigrant groups from the Albanians to Italians, Polish and Ukrainians as well as the Spanish, Portuguese and the Syrians. Each author was to have a first-hand knowledge of the given immigrant group and

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[178] A clipping from the *New York Times*, dated July 1, 1921: "'Y' workers receive Czecho-Slovak Award."
"The international committee of the Young Men's Christian Association of North America has been advised by the Department of State that the Government of the Czecho-Slovak Republic has conferred the Czecho-Slovak Cross of War upon six American Y.M.C.A. secretaries, including the Rev. Kenneth D. Miller of 351 East Seventy-fourth Street."
"Other 'Y' workers to receive the award are Edgar MacNaughton, formerly of Montclaire, New Jersey who is now senior secretary for the American Y.M.C.A. work among prisoners of war throughout Europe; Russell M. Story of 603 Green Street, Urbana Ill., W.A. Smith of the University of Austin, Texas, E.T. Heald Y.M.C.A. secretary at Davenport, Iowa, and G.S. Phelps of Tokio, Japan." (KDM P 1:21)

[179] KDM P 1:26.

[180] KDM P 1:23 (See also letter of August 17, 1922, from the Editor of the *Atlantic Monthly* (at 8 Arlington Street, Boston 17) to The Reverend KDM (at 81 Locust Hill Avenue, Yonkers, New York) accepting his article *Revolutionizing Religion in Europe* for publication (in Vol. 130, No. 5) and sending him a $100 check. The artcile appeared in the *Atlantic Monthly* on pages 684-690 – it includes observations on Yugoslavia, old and new Europe, very accurate on Russia, and on Czechoslovakia, of course, which he knew well, references an article by Alice Masaryk *From an Austrian Prison* published in the *Atlantic Monthly*, November-December 1920 (KDM 1: 4).

the culture of the homeland as well, requirements that KDM was very well qualified to meet.

In 1924, KDM joined Chi Alpha, the oldest clerical club in the country. It was founded in New York City on November 28, 1829, by mostly Presbyterian ministers but later grew into a brotherhood of Protestant pastors on an interdenominational basis, including Presbyterian, Methodist, Baptist, Congregational, and Reformed clergymen. The group met every first Saturday of the month, hosts rotated alphabetically, so did the speakers in discussion after a paper was delivered. Presidency also rotated according to the year of joining, the oldest member serving as president. Meetings consisted of addressing business matters, reading of a paper followed by a discussion, with a dinner shared afterwards. Membership was limited to New York City residents only.[181]

The period between 1922 and 1928 is characterized by the relatively frequent movement of the Miller family within the New York City metropolitan area. The Millers were in search of a more permanent place to live and anchor their family all the while getting to know the city which they both loved so dearly and whose people and history they always studied with passion. It seems that KDM was looking for another direction in his professional career. Having published his second book, *Peasant Pioneers,* in 1925, he was trying to pursue his scholarly and writing ambitions while contemplating his vocation to Christian service as a pastor.

On May 11, 1927, KDM wrote a letter to Frank Dodd of the Dodd & Mead Co. publishers regarding Miller's manuscript translation of the *Broučci* (*The Firefly Family*), a popular book for children with a subtle religious sub-text written by the Czech author Josef Karafiat who, like KDM, was a Protestant clergyman, which Miller proposed to publish after his finishing of the translation.[182]

In the summer of 1927, the Millers went for the first time to Maine where they stayed in a rented place provided by friends of theirs, the Haydens.[183] They would continue to vacation there annually in the following 30 years, having built their own place near a lake in 1936.[184]

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[181] KDM P 1:4.

[182] KDM P 1:5 (This file also contains a typescript of one chapter (14 pages) of the Broucci translation, p. 12 contains a "Translator's note" about the way evangelical congregations in Czechoslovakia worship).

[183] KDM P 1:23

[184] This information was kindly provided by Mrs. Elizabeth Hiteshew, the daughter of KDM, in an email to the editor of February 27, 2006.

Pastor in Madison, New Jersey, 1928-1936

In 1928, a decision was made by KDM that was to settle the family for 8 years in Madison, New Jersey. On March 16, 1928, KDM wrote to Edward P. Holden of Madison, New Jersey, accepting the ministry of the Presbyterian congregation there.

After careful thought and prayer, I have come to the decision that I should accept the offer which you have made on behalf of the congregation. I firmly believe that in coming to the conviction that my duty lies in the direction of the pastorate, and in the opening of the opportunity at Madison, I have been divinely led."

I shall have to leave the decision as to the time when I can begin my pastorate until I return from this trip on March 27th.

My understanding is that you offer a salary of $5,000 a year, plus the rental price of a manse, and the church's share of the pension fund, and a vacation of five weeks. These terms are satisfactory. I presume that you have fixed your allowance for the manse on the basis of the prevailing rentals in Madison. Our family is not large, as you know, but I do feel that a comfortable manse is an essential part of the working equipment of a minister in a parish such as yours."

And may I also ask you all to remember me in your prayers that I may be given the wisdom, the power and the love to be a true shepherd of souls, and that God may abundantly bless us in the relationship into which we are about to enter? Most sincerely yours, KDM[185]

The new pastor was introduced to the town of Madison on Friday, May 4, 1928, by the local newspaper:

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[185] KDM P 1:19 The offer was confirmed and finalized in a response of March 22, 1928, to Rev. Kenneth D. Miller (c/o Hotel Hermitage, Nashville, Tennessee) from Spencer Marsh, of Newark, New Jersey.

"Your letter of the 19th from Nashville is very much appreciated. I thoroughly understand the conditions that existed when you were in Madison recently and was not at all surprised that we did not see you.

"Just a word to tell you that all of the Committee are very much pleased that you have decided to come to us, and I can promise you a most cordial reception from the entire congregation.

"Mrs. Marsh and I want you and Mrs. Miller to feel that you can use our house as a stopping place whenever you decide to come to Madison. Perhaps you would like to come out 'surreptitiously' some day and look us over again. I know you will want to do this when you are helping the Trustees find a house.

"There is another suggestion. Some time it may be convenient for you to come to Newark and have lunch with me. If it is, do not hesitate to do so. Sincerely yours, "
(KDM P 1:18).

Presbyterian Church Installs New Pastor. As pastor of the Presbyterian Church of Madison, the Rev. Kenneth Dexter Miller will be installed Tuesday evening at eight o'clock in Webb Memorial chapel. He will succeed the Rev. Dr. Edwin McAlpin, who resigned last fall because of ill health.…

Mr. Miller is a graduate of Princeton, as well as Union Theological Seminary. After graduating from the seminary, he studied in what is now Czecho-Slovakia for a year. Then he was director of the Jan Husk [*sic*] House in New York, as well as associate minister. During the war he served with the Y.M.C.A. in Russia and for his work with the Czecho-Slovak Legion, which had deserted from the Austrian Army to the Russians, he was decorated with the Czecho-Slovak war cross. After the war he served with the immigration department of the Presbyterian Board of Home Missions and then went to Europe for a year as representative of the General Assembly of the Church to Churches in Europe. Later, after work with the board again, he became a secretary of the Federal Council of Churches in charge of its international work.[186]

In the summer of 1929, the pastor's family introduced its new member, daughter Elizabeth, to the congregation. The family seems to have related well to the congregation and the location was agreeable, within convenient reach of New York City. KDM joined the local Kiwanis Club in Madison[187] and found close friends in town. There is a pause spanning the 1930s in the publication activities of KDM, most likely related to his involvement in raising the children and in his pastoral duties in Madison.

Another instance of recognition was coming his way from the Czechoslovak Republic. The Hussite Theological College established at the Charles University in Prague after the World War decided to confer the honorary degree of Doctor of Theology upon KDM. The diploma, dated October 6, 1930, states that the degree is being given "for literary work and pioneering leadership performed in the interest of the Czechoslovak citizens in the United States."[188]

Since the Millers did not travel to Prague to be present at the ceremony, another celebration was scheduled for June 10, 1931, in Madison. The event was attended by a number of guests from the Presbyterian Church, Czechoslovak Embassy, Princeton University, Union Theological Seminary and from the Prague Hussite

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[186] A clipping from the *Madison Eagle* Vol. XLVIII, No. 18, Madison, Morris County, New Jersey, KDM P 1:21.

[187] KDM P 1:21.

[188] KDM P, Oversize portfolio 1, Dr. J. L. Hromádka was the promoter, Dr. Ferdinand Hrejsa was at the time the Dean of the College. The Miller and the Hromádka family maintained friendly relations long after this event.

Theological College, including Dr. Josef Hromádka who officially conferred the degree.[189] From now on D.D. (Doctor of Divinity) was to appear after KDM's name on most written records.

Continuing a family tradition, in 1935-1936 Kenneth Dexter Jr. went to the Pingry School in nearby Elizabeth, New Jersey, the same school that KDM had attended almost 40 years previously.[190]

In 1936, KDM accepted a senior administrative appointment from the Presbyterian Church to the Presbytery of Detroit to survey and oversee the metropolitan area's Presbyterian churches and their programs. On September 26, 1936, the *Newark News* announced that:

> Rev. Dr. KDM, pastor of Madison Presbyterian Church for eight years, will conduct his last service here tomorrow. He will leave next week to become executive secretary of the Church Extension Board of the Presbytery of Detroit.…
>
> Dr. Miller's duties in Detroit will be supervision of church activities in six counties, comprising about sixty Presbyterian churches. He will preach in a different church each Sunday and during the week will visit the churches, studying needs.[191]

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[189] A commemorative booklet was issued for the occasion: "The Ceremony of Presentation of the Degree of Doctor of Divinity from the Theological Faculty of the University of Prague to the Reverend Kenneth Dexter Miller at the Webb Memorial Chapel, Madison, New Jersey, on Wednesday evening June the Tenth, 1931 at eight-fifteen o'clock." The program included: the Honorable Jan Skalicky, PhD, Counselor of the Czechoslovak Legation, giving an address on "Czechoslovakia's Place in the world"; Reverend Professor Josef L. Hromadka, ThD of the Theological Faculty of the University of Prague, giving another address; Other guests included Josef Lavicka PhD Czechoslovak Consul in New York, Rev. Edwin A. McAlpin DD representing Princeton University, Rev. James M. Howard of the Union Theological Seminary and the Presbytery of Morris and Orange, Rev. William P. Shriver of the Board of National Missions of the Presbyterian Church, USA; Rev. Henry S. Leiper of the Federal Council of Churches in Christ in America; Rev. Alois B. Koukol of the Jan Hus Presbyterian Church, NYC; Rev. Prof. Oscar M. Buck DD, Rev. Prof. J. Newton Davies, STD, Rev. Prof. Edwin Lee Earp, PhD, and Professor Louis C. Jordy, PhD, representing Drew University (KDM 1:21).

[190] Pingry was founded in 1861 as a private (parochial) elementary school for boys, in 1953 it moved to Hillside, New Jersey and merged with the Short Hills Country Day School. In 1975 it became co-educational. Still in existence today. (www.pingry.org, accessed May 27, 2006).

[191] KDM P 1:21.

For his last service at Madison on September 20, 1936, KDM prepared a sermon with the title "What Shall We Do With the Christ?" which the grateful members of the congregation had subsequently arranged to have printed.[192]

Even though the Millers were now living in Detroit, contacts with New York City and Czechoslovakia were maintained. After the death of Tomáš G. Masaryk in 1937, a group of New Yorkers with ties to the country founded the Masaryk Institute, and KDM was among its founding members.

Developments in Europe were troubling for Czechoslovakia and KDM was following the news with anxiety. He was also informed directly by his friends in the country about the current situation there as is indicated by a letter of December 10, 1938, from two of his friends in Bohemia, both involved in the work of the local Y.M.C.A.[193]

New York Mission Society years, 1939-1955

After three years in Detroit, the Miller family moved back to New York in the fall of 1939 when KDM assumed the position of the President of the New York City Mission Society, a position he held until his retirement in 1955.

KDM's years as the chief executive of the New York City Mission Society are described in detail by himself in his last book written together with his wife Ethel, *The People Are the City* (1962). The book is a history of religious activity (mainly Protestant) and social work in New York City from its very beginnings, with focus on the 150 years of existence of the New York City Mission Society. It was published in the year of the Society's 150th anniversary, the Millers having worked on it after their return from Europe in 1957. The position in the Society seems to have brought much satisfaction to KDM and provided an opportunity to realize his wishes and ambitions. He was able to perform Christian service to those in need, in the city he loved and in a position as chief executive of a major institution which allowed him to have a decisive influence on the course of events.

When KDM assumed his position in 1939, the country (and New York City in no smaller measure) was still going through a recovery from the depression years which

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[192] In 1977, Ethel Prince Miller noted on the back of the text of this sermon the following: "Ken was pretty busy the last week we were there – not much time to write a sermon. So he went to the 'barrel' + actually this was a do over of the 1st sermon he preached in 1928 in Madison! It is a beautiful piece of work, and very moving to the congregation who loved him. Steven Marsh Senior (Elder in the Church) was very pleased with it + said 'Ken, you never could have preached like that 8 years ago.' So Ken told him + they had a great time over it. + The Church published it!! EPM 1977" KDM P 1:3.

[193] KDM P 1:18 Letter from Dr. Lukl and his wife describing the post-Munich situation.

generated a considerable amount of work and difficulty for agencies engaged in dealing with social problems, especially those related to poverty. Another world war was brewing and in KDM's view, the Society was standing at the crossroads and in need of new perspectives and directions, building on its long and successful history of work among New York's neediest.

With his usual determination and diligence he set to work to first assess the present situation and outline new possible ways for change. At the outset of his career with the Society, a major donation assisted in propelling some of his ideas and projects forward. In 1939 a bequest made by a wealthy donor (Charles F. Pope) on behalf of the Society was made available, doubling the Society's endowment fund.

In his speech at the 117th Annual Meeting of the Woman's Branch of the Society on January 8, 1940, KDM outlined his thoughts regarding the directions that the Society would consider.

> New York is a great proving ground of the power of democratic institutions to fuse diverse elements into a unity, and to lift the people thus unified to a high level of living." (p. 6)
>
> People of all churches are coming to realize that the situation such as exists in New York is too big for Presbyterians, or Episcopalians, or Methodists, or Baptists acting separately. It can be met only by Christians working together. If our Society does nothing other than to demonstrate that Baptists and Presbyterians and Methodists and Episcopalians and Reformed people can work together, not only harmoniously, but effectively, it will be tremendously worth while.
>
> We are here to throw our personalities into the missionary task of winning New York City for Christ. In the last analysis, our work will succeed or fall, not in accordance with the type of program or policy adopted, but in accordance with the type of personality which we prove ourselves to be, and the way in which the supreme personality of the Christ is reflected in us and through us.[194]

Among the major achievements of the Society under his directorship, KDM lists the following: organizational and structural changes in the Society (its unification with the Woman's Branch, up to that time a separate, self-governing body within the Society); interdenominational cooperation with other Protestant social services agencies in the city, addressing the social spiritual needs of the new large scale public housing projects; establishing camps providing opportunities for regular outdoor activities for the urban youth, including the poor; opening of

[194] KDM P 1:2.

interdenominational churches in locations of greatest need; extensive training for new leadership; and support of education for staff.[195]

KDM summarized his vision for the New York City Mission Society at the closing of his and Ethel's book in this way:

> The old commitment to its historic purpose still holds: to bring to all the people of the city and especially to its most needy communities the good news of the Gospel of Christ expressed in a broad-visioned, religiously motivated program of service.[196]

In spite of being busy with the transformation of the Society during World War II, KDM did not forget about the Czechoslovaks and became active in American Relief for Czechoslovakia. This organization sent him in his capacity as chairman to Czechoslovakia in 1946 to assess the situation personally. A photograph documents his meeting with President Edvard Beneš during this trip.[197]

A document dated May 3, 1947, contains the text of his talk for a meeting of the Chi Alpha society – "Pity the Poor Liberal" (8 pages). Liberals are described as those standing between the right and the left. KDM "pridefully thinks of himself as liberal," re-examines his positions, clarifies his philosophy of life and restates his confession of faith in the midst of "devastating crossfire." The paper starts with a definition of a liberal:

> Liberalism is that which liberates. It proceeds on the assumption that human life can only reach its fullest stature through continuous liberation – through the struggle to be free. It would free human life from bondage of whatever sort.…
>
> His is the open mind.
>
> I like to think of myself as occupying a position a little left of center on political, economic and religious questions. However, it is not a fixed position.… But I never seem to swing as far to the right, as I do to the left, although advancing age, no doubt puts its breaks upon the swings to the left.…
>
> A liberal has to demonstrate that he can think clearly, and yet believe deeply. He has to prove that one can be mystical and practical; evangelical and rational; God-centered and man-serving.[198]

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[195] *The People Are the City*, pp. 176-214.
[196] Ibid. p. 245.
[197] KDM P 1:4 and KDM P 1:15.
[198] KDM P 1:4.

Kenneth Dexter Miller's published works

While he was president of the Mission Society, KDM published two books: *We Who Are America* in 1943 and *Man and God in the City* in 1954. These two works form two consecutive pieces in the series of Miller's major publications which he began in 1922 with *The Czechoslovaks in America*.[199] This was a study of an immigrant group or rather two immigrant groups that he was very familiar with as well as with the countries of their origin in Europe. It attempted to cover all aspects of the immigrants' life in the United States and understand it in relationship to the background from which these new arrivals came. KDM utilized his pre-war experiences in Bohemia, Moravia and Slovakia, his Russian sojourn with the Czechoslovak Legion, his work at the Jan Hus Neighborhood House and also his extensive travel to and study of the various Czech and Slovak settlements in the United States in the early 1920s. Even though his book is not free of several sweeping and unhelpful generalizations which attach simplified, collective labels to the Czech and Slovak immigrants while ignoring the individuality of each one of them (KDM himself is, however, aware of the danger of making such generalizations as he explicitly states throughout his book), it is a thorough and a detailed study of the two groups, taking into account the most significant contemporaneous scholarship and available data. The book is especially valuable for providing a perspective from the outside of the immigrant groups themselves, a perspective of someone who is not an immigrant or a descendant of immigrants from the concerned regions himself. It was one of the first – if not the first – accounts of the two immigrant groups of the kind, written with deep knowledge and understanding of the people, yet maintaining critical distance and emotional detachment.

KDM's next book, *Peasant Pioneers: An Interpretation of the Slavic Peoples in the United States*, published in 1925, was of a much broader scope which did not permit in-depth examination of each group, but enabled KDM to draw parallels between various Slavic nationalities and their immigrant experiences. It came at a time when nations and ethnic groups were referred to as "races" and the belief in distinct general racial characteristics for each "race" was widespread. It is necessary to point out that it was also a time when the government introduced the quota system numerically limiting immigration to the country from individual regions. This system virtually stopped immigration from Central, Eastern and Southern Europe while making space for the continuation of significant immigrant flows from the "more desirable" Western and Northern Europe. KDM's book throughout is a

[199] For complete bibliographic information regarding the books by KDM, see the listing at the end of the biographical sketch.

great defense of the Slavic peoples who were largely excluded from entry into the country by the quota system. KDM repeatedly emphasizes the potential that the nationalities of his interest hold when given the right opportunity and he also looks critically at the conditions immigrants were often exposed to after their arrival. He suggests that the blame for the way some immigrants seem to disrupt the American way of life lies often with the Americans themselves who mistreat and exploit the newcomers.

In 1943, KDM's *We Who Are America* took on even a broader subject, covering the entire history of immigration to North America in an attempt to find parallels and identify differences among all the various waves of immigrants coming to American shores, mainly from Europe. KDM took great effort in this book to define what it means to be an American and what are the principles and ideals that the American society has been built on, and how immigrants succeed or fail in adopting the true American ideals. For KDM, America can strive to fulfill all its ambitions and hopes in meaningful ways only as a Christian nation. Roman Catholic and Orthodox Christians, and Jewish people as well are recognized as potential contributors to the common American cause, although sometimes they are also understood as an opportunity for Protestant outreach. It is important to note, though, that KDM was not in favor of any kind of aggressive missionary programs, always emphasizing that service to those in need regardless of their creed and convictions comes first.

Having served for 12 years as president of the New York City Mission Society, KDM was contracted by the Friendship Press of the National Council of Churches of Christ, Joint Commission on Missionary Education in 1952 to write a book covering the "Theme of the Year – City, Length 40,000 words, type of book – Basic Study Book."[200] It was published in 1954 under the title *Man and God in the City*. This was a publication addressing primarily the issues of urban Protestant ministry of the time, namely the changes caused by the mass exodus of traditional urban congregations to the suburbs of major metropolitan areas and their replacement by the urban poor and minorities. KDM urges the importance of maintaining traditional Protestant (Presbyterian, Episcopalian, Baptist and Congregational) ministry in the city and the responsibility of the wealthy suburban parishes for the church buildings they had abandoned and for supporting the services to the new populations moving in. KDM was aware of the often successful work of the Pentecostal movement and various evangelical bodies (sometimes even the Roman Catholics) rapidly developing in the urban settings, but he did have some

[200] Hazel Bedell's letter of December 11, 1953 (KDM P 1:19).

reservations about the "emotional" aspects of the street preaching, public testimonies, miraculous healing and dramatic conversions. *Man and God in the City* was well received by interested reviewers and became a successful book selling 75,000 copies within a year of its publication.

In 1962, *The People Are the City* concluded the published production of KDM as a story of service to the disadvantaged in his beloved city of whose history the immigrants, another great subject of KDM's life, have always been a very significant part, at least in KDM's view. The scope of this book embraces not only immigrants, or Protestants, but all of those in the great city of New York who for one reason or another find themselves in need of assistance. These include women and men of all ages, both native and immigrants to the city – old and new (namely African Americans from the South and Puerto Ricans), the inhabitants of the increasing number of public housing projects and children and youth in danger of becoming involved in gang activities. Working with his wife Ethel ("a clinical psychologist and sociologist" who "was active in community and church organizations" and "a long-time student of old New York"[201]) in the relatively calm conditions of their retirement, the last book appears to be a true labor of love.

When KDM retired from the New York City Mission Society in early 1955[202], he was not, however, ready to give up the active life of an executive immediately. Moving once more from New York to Madison did not remove him too far from his continuing activities in the city (he did resign, much to the regret of his fellow members, from his position of Secretary in the Chi Alpha Society at the end of 1954

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[201] *The People Are the City*, p. 258.

[202] On May 22, 1955 – a program honoring Dr. and Mrs. Kenneth Dexter Miller was held, celebrating also the NYCMS's Camp Minisink's Annual Family Day (camp Minisink near Port Jervis, New York, a camping facility "for boys and girls to play, work and worship according to Christian ideals, under the guidance of wholesome and experienced leaders," mainly from Harlem. In the program booklet, KDM was characterized as "A staunch supporter of the Harlem unit (of the NYCMS, serves 17 churches and centers in Manhattan, Brooklyn and the Bronx).… Dr. Miller was particularly known to practically every man, woman and child in the Minisink family, they know him as a smiling, affectionate and kind man, and most of all, for his unswerving interest towards them.…What has been said about Dr. Miller could just as easily be applied to his wife, Mrs. Miller. These two people, Dr. and Mrs. Miller, will long be remembered and appreciated by the Harlem Unit, for the wonderful relationship that has prevailed all those many years. Staff join in expressing appreciation to.…" (KDM P 1:21).

– although it seems that he did so mainly in anticipation of his prolonged engagement in Europe.)

With AFCR in Munich, 1955-1957

On October 31, 1955, KDM received a letter from Ján Papánek, president of the American Fund for Czechoslovak Refugees (in which KDM was actively involved as member of the board of directors since its founding by Ján Papánek in 1948) stating that:

Following our previous conversation I wish to inform you that American Fund for Czechoslovak Refugees, Inc. is pleased to appoint you as its European representative with the offices in Munich.

Your duties will be to carry out the program of the organization with special regard for the following:

a) help resettle Czechoslovak escapees in the free world – as many as possible in the United States

b) supplement the daily needs of those still in Germany, Austrian, Italy and other European countries – supplying clothing and shoes, food and medicaments when necessary

c) control the distribution of surplus food secured by American Fund for Czechoslovak Refugees from the U.S. Government

d) carry out any other task connected with the fulfillment of the program through the American Fund for Czechoslovak Refugees field offices in Europe, delegating the necessary authority for specific duties under your control to Mr. Keith R. Turner in Germany and Mr. Michael A. Farrell in Austria, in order that the Czechoslovak escapees eligible under the provisions of the Refugee Relief Act of 1953 to emigrate to the United States may be processed as quickly as possible to effect their resettlement.

e) establish and maintain necessary relationships with the German authorities connected with our program.

You will be responsible for prompt and full compliance with the contracts concluded by you or your delegates with the authorities in charge of the U.S. Escapee Program, under which the American Fund for Czechoslovak Refugees operates abroad.

You will report to the New York Headquarters regularly on your activities and achievements, as well as on the financial administration of the funds received under contracts with the Government and the American Fund's for Czechoslovak refugees own funds at your disposal.

Your term of employment will be for the duration of contract between the American Fund for Czechoslovak Refugees and the U.S. Escapee Program covering the employment of the European Director, and your regular salary of $667.00 will be paid to you at the end of every month and expenses for travel approved as necessary outside of Germany in the interest of the efficient carrying out of above mentioned duties will also be paid, as well as the return passage from Europe for yourself and Mrs. Miller upon completion of your assignment.

On you way to Munich you will stop in Frankfurt to meet with the representatives of the U.S. Government on whose cooperation and help the Fund depends to such a considerable degree.

Wishing you the best success in your mission, Sincerely yours,[203]

Three days before his and Ethel's departure for Europe, KDM received the second annual "Good Neighbor Award" from the New York City Mission Society. On November 10, 1955, they embarked upon their voyage across the Atlantic, arriving in Munich on November 20, 1955.[204] According to his identification documents KDM was now 6' 3" tall, with grey hair and weighing 160 pounds.[205] While he was busy in Europe working on behalf of refugees from Czechoslovakia escaping from the persecution by the Communist authorities there or pursuing a new life in the free world, honors did not cease to be bestowed upon him from the United States. In April of 1956 he received a certificate of recognition from the New York City Mission Society where everyone still remembered their former director with affection.[206]

The following month KDM received an unexpected letter from the President of Princeton University, Harold Dodds, informing him of the decision of the University's Board of Trustees to confer the honorary degree of Doctor of Divinity

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[203] KDM P 1:18.

[204] KDM P 1:23.

[205] KDM P 1:26.

[206] April 9, 1956 – "For fifteen years Dr. Kenneth D. Miller gave to this Society the mind and heart of a man dedicated to God in the service of the people of New York.
As President and Executive Director he brought new life to his old Society in every facet of its many activities. In the reconstitution of its organization to make the Society and its Woman's Branch a harmoniously functioning unit, thus integrating and vitalizing all the work of the Society; in the consolidation, relocation and opening of old and new mission churches better to serve the needs of ever-changing areas in the City; in the persuasive presentation to the Protestant Council, to denominational representatives and to generous benefactors of the expanding opportunities for Christian service in this City of Wistful Pagans; in the development of programs for scholarships for young leaders in city churches; for pensions for staff, for summer camps; for interdenominational cooperation; for increasing gifts from living donors – in all these ways, and many more – Dr. Miller enlarged the usefulness of the Society and made known its work throughout the City.
His extraordinary competence evoked our respect and admiration. His compassionate understanding made us all love him.
Be it therefore resolved that this evidence of our affection and esteem be spread upon the minutes of the Society and a copy forwarded to Dr. Miller." (KDM 1:24).

upon him. This was an event that made the Millers change their plans for their stay in Europe as arrangements were being made for them to travel back (this time by air) to the United States in September 1956 to attend the ceremony at Princeton's Nassau Hall Bicentennial Convocation. KDM cherished the honorary degree from Princeton for it is – in his own words – "the height of ambition for every Princeton man."[207] Later, he would express his gratitude also to one of his Princeton classmates, Timothy Pfeiffer, who at the time was a member of Princeton's as well as the New York City Mission Society's Board of Trustees.[208]

The official citation indicates that the degree was given to KDM as

> A Presbyterian Minister who combines the militance and mildness of the true Christian character, a zealous missionary whose work has carried him from the wilderness of Russian Siberia to the beleaguered churches of Czechoslovakia, he exemplifies the living truth that 'One on God's side is a majority.'[209]

The Millers returned to Munich after only a few days in the U.S. and stayed for another year before they set out on their final return trip in September 1957 which included traveling along the Rhine to Aachen and across the English Channel/Canal La Manche to Dover. A week was spent in London and further travels were undertaken through England and Scotland before sailing the traditional immigrant route from Southampton to New York at the end of the month.

Retirement

While continuing to live in Madison after the Millers returned from Europe, KDM was making frequent trips to New York City as invitations continued to come to give sermons at special services, dedications of churches, funerals of personalities with whom KDM had had close relationships, class reunions[210], also to give interviews on the radio and television and at other occasions. In 1959, he became the founding chairman of the Masaryk Publication Trust, co-founded by Alice Masaryk and her sister Olga Revilliod in New York. The Trust was created to

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[207] Letter to Harold Dodds, June 4, 1956 (KDM P 3: Scrapbook 1).

[208] Correspondence with Timothy Pfeiffer (KDM P 3: Scrapbook 1).

[209] KDM P 1:21.

[210] 50th at Princeton in 1958, at UTS in 1962 – When he gave a speech at the 50th anniversary reunion of the Union Theological Seminary class of 1912, he mentioned 45 still-living members of the 72-man class, "30 of us … served as pastors, 9 in education …, 1 openly and ashamedly in politics" (KDM P 1:3).

provide a venue for disseminating their father's writings, banned in Czechoslovakia and out of print in the West at the time.[211] In 1964, KDM wrote a brief history of the Chi Alpha Society, 40 years after he had joined it in 1924. In addition to trips to their summer retreat in Maine[212], the Millers were now also occasionally visiting their children's families, Betsy in Los Angeles and Kenneth Dexter Jr. in Princeton.

When work on *The People Are the City* was finished and the book published in 1962, KDM began to compile his recollections of his encounters with the Czechoslovaks and the *Uncle from America* was written in the mid-1960s in cooperation with Ethel. His attempts to have it published failed as mentioned at the opening of this text.

In the latter part of the decade, KDM's health was also beginning to have an impact on his activity, not preventing him, however, to remember to send a letter in March 1968 to Olga Masaryk Revilliod in Geneva, Switzerland on the occasion of Tomáš G. Masaryk's birthday on the 7th. The Millers were at that time staying in Florida at an invitation from friends. KDM's health deteriorated further in Florida necessitating an urgent trip back to New Jersey where he later died at the Inglemoor Nursing Home in Livingston, New Jersey, on Saturday, July 6th, 1968. It happened to be on the same date when one of the persons he admired and respected most, Jan Hus, was executed in the Swiss town of Konstanz in 1415, and only a month and a half before the Soviet occupation of his beloved Czechoslovakia. *Uncle from America* is being published now as a testimony to the fond relationship its author had with her people and culture.

The funeral took place on Tuesday, July 9, at the First Presbyterian Church in Madison where KDM was pastor in 1928-1936. Ján Papánek of the AFCR paid a tribute to his friend of 30 years and after listing his achievements he concluded with saying that "Kenneth Miller merited well the highest decoration of the Order of White Lion of the Czechoslovak Republic of Masaryk and Beneš."[213] An obituary was published in the *New York Times*[214] stressing KDM's contribution to interdenominational work in "the city of wistful pagans" as KDM liked to call it and

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[211] *Alice Garrigue Masaryk – her life as recorded in her own words and by her friends*, compiled by Ruth Crawford Mitchell, University of Pittsburgh, 1980, p. 221-222.

[212] According to Elizabeth Hiteshew, Alice Masaryk was a guest of the Miller's in Maine after her exile in the United States following the 1948 communist takeover of Czechoslovakia.

[213] Awarded in 1946 at the Czechoslovak Embassy in Washington for KDM's service as Chairman of American Relief for Czechoslovakia during World War II.

[214] July 8, 1968; the *Princeton Alumni Weekly* published an obituary on October 1, 1968

his work in Harlem and public housing projects as well as his foreign engagement and his involvement in programs for immigrants.

Conclusion

When looking at KDM's life from a distant perspective in time, it cannot be overlooked that he spent most of his life "being in charge." Soon after completing his studies, he was in charge of matters at the Jan Hus Neighborhood House; in Russia he was in charge of the Y.M.C.A.'s work among the Czechoslovaks there; as a pastor in Madison he was – in a way – in charge of his congregation; in Detroit he was an executive in the local Presbytery; at the New York City Mission Society he was chief executive. While working for the American Relief for Czechoslovakia and for the American Fund for Czechoslovak Refugees, it was in positions as director.

When he reported his updates to the Princeton reunion secretary in 1956 he summarized his recent years as follows: "In the fall of 1957 returned to the US after two years in Germany heading up work among Czechoslovak refugees after having retired (for three months) from heading up the work of the New York City Mission Society for fifteen years."[215] It seems that he enjoyed "being in charge," "directing," heading up," being an executive. When describing a pastor of one church under the auspices of the Mission Society he used the following words: "one need to hear him preach or see him handle the many difficult situations that arise to know that here is a born leader, forceful, but kindly and sympathetic to both old and young."[216]

The available records and testimonies suggest that KDM was also "forceful, but kindly," making the right decisions at the right pace and with the appropriate force in order to achieve a well-thought out objective (one example could be his phenomenal, large-scale bakery and sausage-making operation started and successfully developed in Cheliabinsk in 1918 almost from scratch in the middle of largely resource-less environment, supplying quality, inexpensive food not only to the Czechoslovak soldiers but also – to a limited degree – to the civilians in the area). Towering at well over 6 feet, with open mind always eager to learn from its surroundings, sensitive to the needs of those who are disadvantaged, accompanying his decision-making with prayers anchored in deep faith, he would perhaps have had reasons to see himself as a born leader, too. Did he?

According to KDM's daughter Elizabeth, his leadership manifested itself in a low-key, understated way, as a by-product of his way of life. He was passionate about social justice and social gospel. He cared deeply about what he was doing. While

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[215] KDM P 1:21.

[216] KDM, *The People Are the City*, p. 240.

living a Christian way of life was important to him, he did not engage in proselytizing. (His own daughter joined the Episcopalian denomination, and it never became an issue with her Presbyterian father.) His people skills endeared him to those around him, who worked for him with enjoyment in an effort to match his own hard work.[217]

When he resigned from the post of secretary at the Chi Alpha Society in 1954, one of his fellow members (by several decades KDM's senior) characterized KDM in these words:

I grieve to hear that you decline to accept reelection as secretary of Chi Alpha. You have been not only its recorder but its executive – able, going, faithful, efficient. You have restrained the belligerent, encouraged the diffident, soothed the offended, kept us away from the rocks of controversy and out of the clutches of Senator Mc. Carthy. Now, as you step down from the throne to sit with us commoners, we shall revere your memory as a capable, kindly administrator, who, with ample opportunities for personal enrichment left his great office as poor as he entered it. Your admiring and affectionate servant, Arthur J. Brown.[218]

Weighing carefully his personal interests and what he perceived as his duty of service to others (and being careful not to give preferences to the former) was always an important aspect of KDM's decision making while serving in all his executive positions, always in organizations concerned in the first place with service to others, especially those in need. An early glimpse of this quality of KDM's character can be seen already in 1918 when as a young man of 30 years he was considering his further plans in the Russian city of Cheliabinsk:

I don't know at all how things are going to turn out, and the uncertainty is trying on one's nerves. Mr. Atherton, who is about 25 miles back is keen for us going by way of Vladivostok even if some of the men do go by way of Archangel, but I am very loathe to leave the men here. I have a sort of sentimental pride in sticking with them, and even if they should go that way which would be fraught with more or less dangers I sort of feel that I should go with them. But again, aside from personal reasons, there are considerations which may move me to go via Vladivostok and America in any event. A part of the troops that have gone ahead may go thru America, and I should not like to miss the opportunity. Then we must get a lot of supplies and men from America, and I would much rather see to that personally than to leave it to Mr. Atherton or to arrange for it by cable. But you know how I am, dear. Just because it would mean so much to me personally to go by way of America, I am purposely weighing more carefully the reasons for going the other way in case I should be

[217] Interview with Elizabeth Hiteshew, Feb. 1, 2009, Mall of America, Minnesota, by DN.
[218] Letter of December 28, 1954 (KDM P 1:23).

called upon to do so. In short I am trying to determine what is my duty irrespective of my own personal inclinations. I am still hoping that there will be no conflict between my duty and my desires. It is still possible that the transport may go via Vladivostok – which would be the best possible solution.[219]

At the end of *The People Are the City*, KDM introduces some of the outstanding personalities whom he had met during his term with the New York City Mission Society. After brief sketches of the pastors, nurses and social workers he claims that:

> This is the material of which the City Mission story has been made – individuals literally born again and entering upon a life of service to others.[220]

Like them, KDM also early in his life decided to abandon the studies that were to lead him on to a career as a lawyer and dedicate his life to service to others – the Bohemian immigrants in New York, the Czechoslovak soldiers in Russia, his congregation in Madison, the poor of New York City, victims of war suffering in Czechoslovakia, or refugees after the communist coup. Many were touched by Kenneth D. Miller's compassion and efforts to provide meaningful help, on both sides of the Atlantic as well the Pacific oceans.

Daniel Necas, 2010

[219] Letter to Ethel Prince, Cheliabinsk, May 17, 1918 (in family possession).
[220] *The People Are the City*, p. 241.

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Appendix 1

Journal of Kenneth Dexter Miller:

Volume 4 – May 17, 1918 – September 15, 1918

Entries for April 30 – June 5, 1918

[The handwritten journal entries were transcribed with minimal editing, to reflect their nature as closely as possible. Ed.]

Tuesday, April 30 – In Cheliabinsk held up supposedly because the railroad beyond Chita will not take more than one train a day, although there is also word that the Germans have demanded that Russia stop the transport of troops through to France – With James and Partridge for a bath – and after 2 hours of wait finally got in there – then for dinner up town – a dusty, dirty town – ramshackle. Back for bicker with Pokorny, son of farar (*pastor*) in Brno – on Italian front most of the time – then to get records from 3rd Reg. staff and back for a 2 hours concert for the men which they enjoyed hugely.

Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, May 1-3
In Cheliabinsk waiting for developments. Seems to be purely a technical question – the hold up – but all sorts of rumors going around – trying to get new car and get it fixed up but find it hard to get anything done. To John in with Serbs and once again – as overbearing as ever. "42" with James and Partridge – writing my story – studying French.
Turned cold and wind blew through the wagon like a sieve.

Saturday, May 4 – Wednesday, May 8.
In Cheliabinsk – all sorts of rumors – about our transport – stay here 3 weeks – stopped indefinitely – starting to move – but are the which we sit here – James and Partridge got off Monday night – after a lot of fuss – at 2 or 3 a.m. P. grumpy. James a good fellow.
Plan set on forth for championship football game, Sokol exhibition and athletic games and they are fixed in in great style. Wagon getting fixed up fine for school – room for 40 people. Teaching English all the while – good progress. No word from outside world at all – nor from Vladivostok.

Thursday, May 9 – Tuesday, May 14.
In Cheliabinsk – in my new car – fixed up ½ as school and ½ as budoir and fine and comfortable. Working on slavnost – which had to be postponed because cold. And on French and English lessons which we finally pulled off in grand style, having lessons all afternoon and evening.
Visit from the American Consul Mr. Harris, and audience with Kotrba. Also Mr. Atherton came in to see me – 25 versts out only.

All the Third Regiment here and 2 of 6th – supply train and hospital – 9 trains. A Magyar threw a brick at one of our men and they surrounded the car and killed one. Big stir about it, with a process between boys and Bees not impossible.

Dope is that we are going via Archangel which upsets my plans and puts me in a quandary. Lot of old friends here – sjezd bude zde (*congress will be here*).

Wed. May 15 – Fri May 17

Situation getting increasingly tense – owing to the attack on one of our men by a Magyar red guard – and the killing of two Magyars by our fellows in retaliation. Few of our men called up by the Bees as witnesses and then held as prisoners. A deputation sent demanding their immediate release – but they also imprisoned. Then all of the men ordered out – much to their joy and all that had muskets marched uptown – seized the railroad station, telegraph, ammunition stores and all the important points in the city. The Bees fleeing – machine guns flanked at the station. The boys simply delighted over the turn in affairs – sang their heads off as they marched. From the way they talked about going to "vybilit" the town, I thought it would be a hard job holding them in – but no resistance was offered. Went with Reichl out towards the city where the 2nd Battalion was stationed on reserve. Boys much excited, then back. Karel (Persitz) came along to report. Jumped into the headquarters with a bomb in one hand and a revolver in the other and hollered as loud as they could and all the Bees went out the window head first. He appropriated a gun, a sword, binoculars and a vessel to keep things rare in. Also visited the circus and searched all the prisoners for arms.
Events bound to have consequences – may wind up in our taking all of Siberian road and just traveling on. So looks like a little excitement now.

May 17-26, Cheliabinsk
A hectic week full of rumors, uncertainty and indecision. Our around occupation of the town caused quite a furore amongst the local Bees – who started to investigate matters. But their hostility soon wore off and they seemed anxious only to get us off and out of the way.
The incident here changed the whole policy of C-S's and instead of bickering any longer with them, the National Council, Maxa et al. were ignored, a small governing committee formed which was to plan for demonstration of force and by that means compel the Bees to send us along. This plan was just about worked out well when news came that one of the echelons of the Sixth Regiment had been held up by a torn up track, this side of Omsk. When they got out of the train to see what was the matter, they were fired upon by German and Magyar prisoner Internationalists – we had 28 killed and 18 wounded including Capt. Ulrich severely wounded. When the news came to Cheliabinsk, immediately 3 echelons of the Second Regiment were dispatched there to help them and to take Omsk.
That night Vojtechovsky ordered Cheliabinsk taken – and at 4 a.m. one battalion sneaked around behind and captured the arsenal – with 2,000 guns, 4 heavy guns and a mass of ammunition – the Russian offered no resistance saying, "Here tovarisch take my gun." Only the Germans and the Magyars offered resistance and about 10 of them were killed and the rest gathered in the open park and held under arms.
In the morning the station was a sight. All of the captured cannons and guns were brought down and loaded in our trains, everybody smiling and happy.
In the midst of all the excitement Atherton came with Second Regiment and after bickering over the situation and in view of the news from Vladivostok and all – we made preliminary preparations to go ahead by passenger train with Sipek, Masaryk's adjutant. The events here of course disturbed our plans and we shall have to wait until things settle down, or until they go. If all goes the way it did here – we shall get thru Siberia O.K. Great fun!

May 27, 28, 29
In Cheliabinsk – on a war footing – armed trains going off every little while to different points – one battalion of Second Regiment to Zlatoust where the Bees were waiting for them at the bridge with machine guns. Our men got out of the cars and sent the empty train in ahead. Bees fired by salvos on the train, but our men charged and took them and guns captive.
One train went towards Ekatrinburg to tear up the tracks. Big excitement among the people around the station. Now the "counter-revolutionists" have freedom of

speech and they are using it to the full – hauling out the Bees and the Red Army and finding an astonishing number of supporters. Railroad men were on the point of striking when we threatened force and then they thought it over. No trains running and the station is filled up with trains and with people waiting to get out.
On the afternoon of the 29th after some days of uncertainty as to the situation elsewhere, news came via a Romanian officer – that Penza was ours, Samara in the hands of the Serbs and Zlatoust ours – while beyond Omsk, the whole line beyond Irkutsk was in our hands. Our men advancing on Omsk from both sides. Fifth and Eighth Regiments ordered to return to Vladivostok. French government thoroughly approves of our action and wants us all to assemble east of Cheliabinsk, seize the railroad, disarm German prisoners, etc.
If this is all true, looks as if we would not leave Siberia.

May 30
Cheliabinsk – A beautiful spring day, fairly quiet here – one echelon went back to help – leaving only 3 echelons here. All on guard at night for reports of an armed resistance on the part of the workingmen were spread abroad – but nothing happened. Tracks torn up on all sides around and no trains running. Arranged to have one car hitched on the first train leaving for the east – but no telling when that will be.

May 31 – June 1, 2
Warfare still going on towards Zlatoust and Omsk, with trains going off every day or so, armed to the teeth, guns mounted on platform cars and in front of engine. American iron cars transferred into armed cars with sand etc. reports coming in every little while of progress of events.
At Zlatoust staff of First Regiment fallen upon by Bees and train lost and men who poorly armed beat off Magyars with stones and captured machine guns etc. Had to go on foot to Miass where supported by parts of 2nd and Third Regiments – they are fighting for Zlatoust – Pialek Por. Went to negotiate with Bees and taken prisoner – Commissioner there breathing fire and brimstone vs. us – threatening with imprisonment in camps, shooting etc. – we reply by taking everything in sight.
Whole Siberian line from Tomsk to Irkutsk ours. Gajda wires to that effect ending: "Today I finish up with Tomsk, sent ultimatum to Bees in Omsk that unless they surrender in 24 hours would bombard the city – Syrovy off to help.
Here all quiet, working on articles, etc.
Sunday to demonstration of new government – 3 cheers for CS who helped us to overthrow the Bees. To circus in evening with Herr Eisenberger and Svoboda.

New government here – as everywhere in Siberia – looks as if we put the finishing touch to the Bees – here at least and probably everywhere. What will the French and the other Allies say to it?

June 3, 4, 5
On advice of Colonel that we would be here for at least a month longer, started to work to open our "Vojenský Klub" in the stolovnaya – near station. Kino arranged for and set up, films secured – rooms set in order to prepare to make kvas and ice cream and everything very promising.
On June 5 our car hit a stone while we were shifting around the yards and went off the track – causing a big commotion in the yards and throwing everything in the car upside down. Lucky car did not turn over.
The French mission arriving here expressed disapproval of the steps taken. Allies still want them to disarm and go via Archangel, but I think they will come to their senses finally. Our uprising has caused big excitement throughout Russia, principally because with it has come the overthrow of the Siberian government (Bees) and the establishment of a new.
In Omsk the Russians in the Red Guards refused to fight against the Czechs and the Soviet army made up entirely of Magyars and Germans, commanded by a Magyar officer. Everything looks good from a military stand-point, the Penza group is reported beyond Samara – Maxa thru with a representative of French government and holding the men back from military operations. May be arrested. Cable sent home via Consul Omsk: 'Delayed indefinitely in Siberia. Mail Vladivostok. Cables Omsk, Consul.' Hope it will go thru OK – so they won't worry.

Note by the Editor:

Even though KDM identifies the incident in Cheliabinsk as the main reason for the change in the relationship between the Legion and the Bolsheviks, other sources and scholarship suggest that the developments that culminated in Cheliabinsk in mid-to-late May of 1918 had been in the making for quite some time previously and in a broader context.

The Legion was first established as a unit within the Russian Army shortly after the beginning of World War I, originally from Czech nationals living in Russia. Many of them were still citizens of Austria, now an enemy power of Russia, and by volunteering to fight the Central Powers with the Russian army they proved their loyalty to Russia, largely stabilizing their status in the country. Later, Czech and Slovak recruits from the prisoner of war camps in Russia were admitted although that process was slowed down by the reluctance of the Russian authorities and also by the ineffectiveness of the bureaucratic machinery. When the

Czar was replaced in the March 1917 revolution by the Provisional Government, later headed by A. F. Kerensky, the Czech Legion (still under Russian command) remained loyal to the new Russian government and continued its deployment around Kiev. After the Bolsheviks seized power in October 1917 (local calendar) the Czechoslovak Legion found itself in a new situation. The Bolsheviks were more interested in bringing all of Russia under their rule than in fighting the Central Powers on the front. This was finally and openly confirmed by the Brest-Litovsk Peace Treaty that Russia concluded separately with Germany. Since the Bolsheviks felt there was no need for the Czech military units on the Eastern Front and the Allies were highly interested in their relocation to the Western Front in France, a plan was devised and agreed upon by the Czechoslovak National Council led by Tomáš Masaryk, the Allies and the Bolsheviks to move them to Europe via the port of Vladivostok on the Pacific coast. This required a transport of about 50,000-60,000 men and equipment over the distance of ca. 7,000 miles from the Kiev region east via the Trans-Siberian Railway.

This plan and its conditions were subsequently changed and modified almost constantly by the Bolsheviks who were trying to balance their interests between Germany, the Allies, and the upheaval caused by their efforts to subdue and liquidate all domestic resistance to their power. The transports (having retreated from the Kiev region east to the Penza-Samara area in February 1918) were being stopped and held at railway stations, and new requests for disarmament were raised by the Bolsheviks gradually allowing the Czech troops no arms at all.

The slow movement and the unreliable Bolsheviks were frustrating the troops, and the preference for using force to make their way to Vladivostok was gaining ground among the soldiers and also many officers, tired by the endless negotiations and constant changes in the conditions, hardly ever adhered to by the Bolsheviks. The rift between the military and the political leaders in the Czechoslovak National Council (Masaryk had left Russia in early March 1918 for the United States) was widening and the army called a congress to be held in Cheliabinsk in mid-May 1918 to decide the further direction and policies of the Czechoslovak exit from Russia. A group of officers with strong support of the soldiers was prepared to put forward their proposal for a more resolute attitude toward making the trains move, not excluding armed force.

Meanwhile Lenin and Trotsky realized the potential that the well-armed and organized Czech army could have once it could be used to support the Bolshevik cause and form a core for the then almost non-existent Red Army, which they needed to enforce their rule over the vast expanses of the former Russian Empire. Since the efforts to bring the Czechoslovak Legionnaires to their side by propaganda and negotiations largely failed, they decided to disarm and recruit them by force (or send them to labor camps). This decision was explicitly and openly put into effect by Leon Trotsky in his orders to the local Soviets (councils) along the Trans-Siberian Railway in late May 1918. On May 21, he arrested the chief negotiator of the Czechoslovak National Council in Moscow, Prokop Maxa, forcing him to issue an order to the Czechoslovak troops to completely disarm. This order was rejected by the congress in Cheliabinsk on May 20, and the new Provisional Executive Committee

appointed by the Congress included seven military leaders as well as the now overpowered four members of the Czechoslovak National Council who were present in Cheliabinsk.

Thus a new strategy was adopted by the leadership of the Czechoslovak Legion, now mostly in the hands of the highest officers – to force the way out of Russia via the Trans-Siberian Railway to Vladivostok. If necessary, this meant an open military clash with the Bolsheviks who already in early 1918 arrived at the decision to dissolve the Legion and use the soldiers either for building the Red Army or in labor camps.

While the Cheliabinsk incident described by KDM in his journal was undoubtedly an important trigger in escalating the confrontation between the Legion and the Bolsheviks, it was one of a number of events that had evolved during the previous three months, finally leading to an open uprising of the Czechoslovak Legion in mid-May 1918. This uprising provided an opportunity for all the other anti-Bolshevik forces in Russia to begin a violent civil war that lasted until the summer of 1920 when the Bolsheviks consolidated their power. At the beginning of their struggle, the Bolsheviks were greatly assisted by German, Magyar and Latvian prisoners of war, supplemented by numbers of prisoners of other nationalities, collectively known as "Internationalists" in the service of the Bolshevik revolution. Since the Allies (largely because of the determined attitude by President Wilson) chose not to assist substantially the massive Russian counter-Bolshevik resistance aided by the Czechoslovak Army and others in 1918-1920, Lenin, Trotsky and Stalin were able to install a regime that began a period of 70 years of Communist rule in Russia.

This brief and very simplified account of selected parts of the Czechoslovak Army's story in Russia in 1914-1920 was abstracted mainly from the four volumes by Victor Fic and the one by Serge Petroff (details in the bibliography at the end of biographical essay).

Appendix 2

"Dope Sheet" *by Kenneth Dexter Miller*

Irkutsk, May 7, 1919

In order to keep the glorious traditions of "Chelyabinsk Chatterings" and "Railway Ravelings" not to mention "Yekaterinburg Life" I suppose we ought to name this little sheet "Irkutsk Kut-Ups" or to be even more euphonious "Irkutsk Cooties." But the writer of this sheet is a regular Woodrow when it comes to breaking traditions, even Y.M.C.A. traditions, and so we'll call it just plain "Dope Sheet."

The big idea is "unity." Of course we know that one of the cardinal principles of a "regular" Y.M.C.A. secretary is for each man to go ahead on his own; a principle by the way which we have all learned in Russia where we haven't had very much but "our own" to go on, and where in default of any supplies and equipment to use, we have had at least to use our judgments. Nevertheless, or perhaps therefore, there is something in the old adage by which Russia is now governing herself, to wit, "In Union there is Strength." Accordingly I feel it not to be too unwise nor altogether a waste of time to write a sort of circular letter to all the Secretaries giving some dope that I have picked up here. In the absence of General Orders, which I am constitutionally inhibited from promulgating, I certainly must issue some sort of sheet to justify being encumbered with some sort of a Seniorical title.

First of all – a little confidential Czech political dope. Here at Irkutsk I am in constant touch with Col. Medek, the representative of the Minister of War, and with the Czech Cultural and Information Committee, under whose auspices our work most naturally falls. The news just received here of the official recognition of the Association by the Czech government has had some influence in making their attitude even more friendly to us, but that was scarcely needed in view of the close relations that have always existed. These representatives have however requested our cooperation along certain definite lines in view of the unusual situation which exists in the Czech army today. All of you will have noticed a lowering of the general morale. Some of you have undoubtedly caught rumors of an anti-government movement amongst the soldiers, springing out of their dissatisfaction with the present leadership in Siberia. Perhaps some of you have been unduly alarmed by it. The situation is this. As you know the Czech army was on its way to France when the trouble with the Bolsheviks began a year ago. At that time the Army was partially deformed for the trip, the intention being to reform when they reached

France. Further, until the war was won, and the independence of Czechoslovakia established, the army here was not only a military body but a political body as well, the body politic of the Czechoslovak revolutionary movement. Consequently, the movement to the rear this spring has given the Czechs the first opportunity to put their army on a military basis. Furthermore the establishment of the Czechoslovak government naturally means that the political functions of the Czech soldier cease automatically, and he becomes just a soldier and the army just an army, with the same relations to its lawful government as any other army. Both of these two facts, coming in conjunction, and at a time when the men are tired and homesick, have caused widespread dissatisfaction and discontent. It is a time of readjustment, and the men are finding it hard to readjust themselves to army life in Siberia, when all they want to do is to go home. Undoubtedly too there has been some Bolshevik propaganda amongst them, though not very much. This combination of events has led to a situation in the solution of which the Czech leaders believe we can be of very real help to them. What they ask of us specifically is this: that we use our influence privately and publicly to induce the men to think carefully before believing any of the wild reports that are going around, or before making any wild statements themselves. To bend our influence to get the men to stick it out; and to finish up the trip to Prague as gloriously as they began it. This can best be done by our full program used to the limit, keeping the men occupied as much as possible by sports, entertainments, lectures, etc. It is not our mission to mix into their affairs one way or another. Our place is to keep the men's time so full of wholesome things that they will have no time for the unwholesome. If we do discuss with them privately or publicly any of their problems, it is our bounden duty to bend our efforts to support those who are guiding them, and to help them perform the tasks put upon them faithfully and well.

In the prosecution of our part of it, we are of course pitifully handicapped by lack of material. I am pumping Vladivostok for all I am worth for athletic material, and kinos particularly. If we have plenty of those, it will help a lot. If the stuff doesn't come soon, I shall be in despair. But I have hopes. The Czechs urge all the men especially the older secretaries who know them men and their psychology to stick it out to the end. Personally I just had to change my mind about going away, for I hadn't the heart to leave these men still in Siberia, and now I am going to stick it out to Prague no matter how long it takes; and I wish you would all do the same.

That brings me to another matter, namely the question, when are the Czechs going home? They themselves, even their leaders do not know. Col. Medek told me that if the Siberian Army continues its success and establishes a front on the Volga and takes Viatka (as seems probable) that the Czech will undoubtedly move

along the northern line and break the way through to Vologda and connect up with the Allied forces from Archangel, after which they will either go on through Russia home or out by way of Archangel according to the way things shape themselves. In the other case, the non-success of the Siberian forces, which would mean the prolongation of civil war here, the Czechs would look for transportation home by Vladivostok, preferably by way of America. The whole question will be decided soon, within two months certainly we should know definitely one way or another.

Well that's the general dope. Now I want to give you a general idea of what I am doing here in Irkutsk, for your information, and also as a reason why I cannot at present come along the line with lectures, etc. At present we have four clubs established here in the vicinity with two more in immediate prospect. At Innokentievskaya Vancura has a fine club with the Third Regiment, Hudacky, himself a Slovak has two clubs with the Slovaks, and Viles opened club at the First Regiment Barracks, he himself dividing his time between Irkutsk and the line between here and Krasnojarsk. In addition I am opening a club in the city in cooperation with the Cultural Committee, and we are going down to the hospital at least twice a week. Personally I am doing a great deal of lecturing, and both Vancura and Kovar are also busy most every evening. Kovar is leaving tomorrow with a kino to travel along the line and stop at stations on the way for kino shows and lectures. I imagine it will take him some time to get out in your section, but remember that between here and Krasnojarsk there are many troops stationed without a secretary. My idea is to have Kovar attach himself to the Mariinsk, Achinsk, Bogotol, Taiga section, helping Bunker who has his hands full with their clubs, but I am not settling anything definite until he gets out there, as the situation may change by then. If possible I want to get another such kino, and go along the line and play between Krasnojarsk and Irkutsk. The impression seems to be abroad that I have kinos to burn. I brought two with me. One we have here for the five points mentioned above; the other I am sending with Kovar. I have ordered four more and if I get them I would assign them as follows, Krasnojarsk, Bunker, Filipi or Swanda, one traveling one.

There are most interesting developments in the religious work. Here there are many Protestants amongst the Slovaks. At their suggestion we held communion service on Sunday April 27 and the attendance (250) and interest was so great that we decided to hold services each Sunday. I shall tell Kovar to do the same when he comes along and Filipi also when he gets well. Next Sunday an octette from the First Regiment is to sing. The services are held in a beautiful little German Lutheran Chapel here. The interest in these services, in our lectures on the Y.M.C.A., in my article in the Dennik has been so great that I am convinced that

the time is ripe for an out and out religious campaign. It is interesting too that just at this time comes news that all the Protestant Churches in Czechoslovakia are uniting, that President Masaryk has founded a Protestant Theological Faculty in the University of Prague, that many of the Slovak political leaders are Protestant pastors, that the Czechoslovak government has opened the door to the Y.M.C.A.

I am convinced that this is the psychological time to strike our hardest blows. Our Secretaries are known and respected; we have a peculiar position in the Czech Army, and this position carries with it peculiar responsibilities. Frankly I feel that it is the duty of every one of us to carry on – even if it means some little sacrifice on our part. The new men who have come out, the Czech-speaking men, will be able to put across the religious message. They have come at just the right time. So let's all get to it as we never have before. Who knows but what our seemingly insignificant efforts may have a not an unimportant bearing upon the future development of religious life in Czechoslovakia.

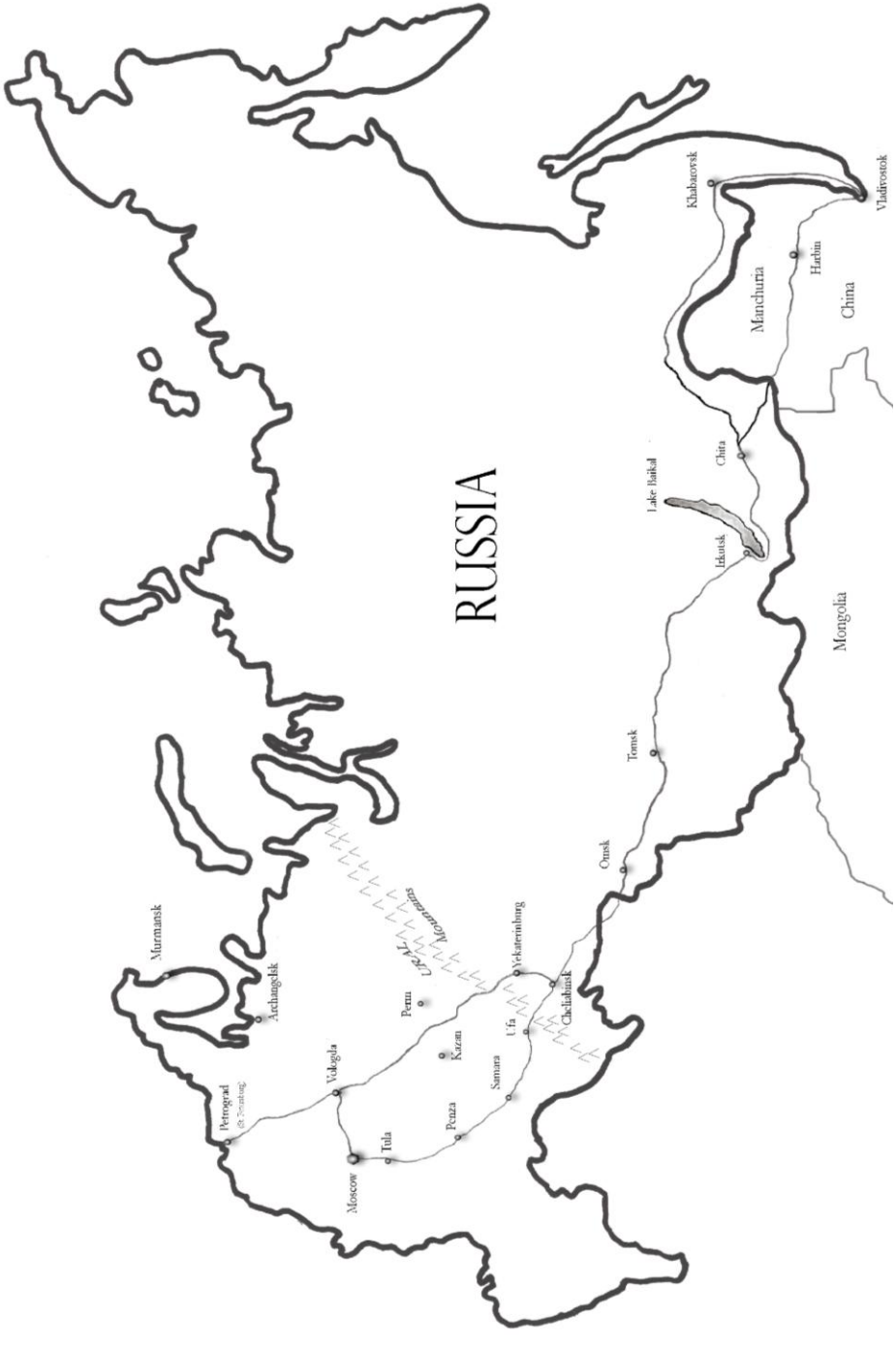
I regard it as my especial duty to help you men to get goods, and you can count on me fighting for you all the time, and if you don't get all that you need as soon as you should, it won't be for lack of trying or lack of interest on my part here.

The best of luck to you all. Drop me a line when you have time and give me the dope – not to be filed away as a report but for information and for the sake of unity in our plans.

Yours as ever, Kenneth Dexter Miller

Note by the Editor:
Interestingly, entire sections of this circular letter by KDM, namely the third and eight paragraphs, are published *verbatim* and without attribution as parts of a letter by E.T. Heald, written in Irkutsk on May 11, 1919. (Heald, 1972, p. 336).

Appendix 3 - Map of Trans-Siberian Railway in Russia (Patrick Weygand)



Cover photograph: Kenneth Dexter Miller in front of the train car converted to a Y.M.C.A. hut on the Trans-Siberian Railway, 1918-1919

1. Portrait of Kenneth D. Miller as a young man, 1916 (im000857)
2. Portrait of Kenneth Dexter Miller in Y.M.C.A. uniform, 1918 (im000818)
3. Kenneth Dexter Miller and a group of his co-workers portrayed in front of a building (his "sausage factory") featuring sausages hanging on the wall in Cheliabinsk, Russia, July 1918 (im000796)
4. Armored freight cars with Czechoslovak Legion soldiers and flag in Russia (im000774)
5. Building on corner formerly Anarchist headquarters. Later headquarters of Czech commandant, Samara, Russia, 1918 (im000772)
6. Czechoslovak troops being transported across river by hand-powered ferry to attack Bolsheviks, 1918 or 1919 (im000775)
7. Crossing the Urals en route for Vladivostok, April 1918 (im000776)
8. Lining up for a cup of hot coffee with the thermometer at 40 below - travelling Y.M.C.A. hut, 1918 or 1919 (im000780)
9. In a Y.M.C.A. car, travelling Y.M.C.A. hut, 1918 or 1919 (im000782)
10. Kenneth Dexter Miller pictured with a group of Czechoslovak soldiers in front of his Y.M.C.A. "Soldiers' Club of the 1st Czechoslovak Division" in Cheliabinsk, Russia, 1918 (im000793)
11. K.D. Miller portrayed on December 25, 1918 in Cheliabinsk, Russia with a group of Czech soldiers who assisted him in his Y.M.C.A. work with the Legion in Russia, Alois Vymětal first from left in first row (im000806)
12. Group of Czechoslovak Legionnaires inside a train car made into their living quarters (im000808)
13. Czechoslovak train going through the Urals, 1918 or 1919 (im000813)
14. Czechoslovak train leaving Cheliabinsk for the front, June 1918 (im000817)
15. Lying - Vojta, Lexa seated - Robertson, Kožíšek, Alexander, Beaverson, Hoofer - Omsk, Feb. 1. 1919 - Thermometer 40 degrees below! (caption by KDM) (im000820)
16. Kenneth Dexter Miller, Rev. Vincent Písek and Charles Atherton standing in front of the Y.M.C.A. office in Vladivostok, Russia, 1919 (im000770)
17. Kenneth Dexter Miller, Vlasta Vráz and Waitstill Sharp photographed in Silesia during their visit of Czechoslovakia as part of the American Relief for Czechoslovakia, 1946 (im000794)
18. Kenneth Dexter Miller and Vlasta Vráz from American Relief for Czechoslovakia meeting with Edvard Beneš, President of Czechoslovakia, his Moravian summer residence, July 1946 (im0007840)

All photographs are from the Kenneth Dexter Miller Papers, Box 3, Immigration History Research Center, University of Minnesota, Minneapolis. They were taken by K.D. Miller or by unidentified photographers when K.D. Miller is pictured.